

To: City Executive Board
Date: 17 November 2016
Report of: Chief Executive
Title of Report: Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To ask the Board to consider the views of party groups and formulate a response to the Boundary Commission for England's proposals on parliamentary boundaries in Oxfordshire.
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Price, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	None
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Agree a response to the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England on parliamentary constituencies as they affect Oxfordshire and in drawing up that response to have regard to the comments made by party groups.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Electorate for the Boundary Commission for England's proposed constituencies that cover Oxford City Council.
Appendix 2	Political groups comments on BCE's proposal
Appendix 3	Risk register

Introduction and background

1. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 makes provision for a reduction in the number of Members of Parliament (and therefore parliamentary constituencies) from 650 to 600. For the current review, 501 of the constituencies will be in England. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is responsible for reviewing constituencies and drawing up proposals. Its final report will subsequently be reviewed by Parliament.

2. The intention/expectation is that the new constituency boundaries will become effective at the next parliamentary general election, scheduled for 7 May 2020.
3. The BCE has produced a [guide to the review](#). Further information about the review as a whole is available on the BCE website at www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland. There is also a separate website for consultation, from which the initial proposals can be accessed - www.bce2018.org.uk/.

Further information

4. The reduction in the number of MPs will inevitably mean a great many changes to the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies. One of the objectives of the review is to ensure that constituencies fall within a defined “electoral quota”, i.e. to ensure that there should broadly be equality in the number of electors represented by each MP.
5. The review is based on the electorate at 1 December 2015. The electoral quota for each constituency is 74,769; and no constituency is expected to fluctuate by more than 5% either way of that figure (i.e. all constituencies must have an electorate in the range of 71,031 to 78,507).
6. As well as the electoral quota, the review will take into account local government and other boundaries, as well as community identity and the breaking of established ties.
7. Oxfordshire is within the South East region, together with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. In the guide, BCE drew attention to the facts that; (i) seats had been allocated to each region in England; (ii) 81 of those were allocated to the South East, exclusive of the two seats required by the Act to be given to the Isle of Wight; and (iii) it would not make any initial proposals to split constituencies between different regions, although such splits could ultimately arise from the responses to its initial proposals.

Current Situation in Oxfordshire

8. The current electorate information for Oxfordshire is summarised as follows:

Electorate at 1/12/15		Difference from Electoral Quota			Within range?
		(Min)	(Max)	(Quota)	
		(71031)	(78507)	(74769)	
Banbury CC	85,398	14367	6891	10629	No
Henley CC	72,682	1651	-5825	-2087	Yes
Oxford East BC	70,293	-738	-8214	-4476	No
Oxford West and Abingdon CC	73,647	2616	-4860	-1122	Yes
Wantage CC	80,859	9828	2352	6090	No
Witney CC	78,455	7424	-52	3686	Yes

9. As can be seen, the current Banbury, Oxford East, and Wantage constituencies all fall outside the required electorate range. The electorates for each ward within the two constituencies within Oxford is attached at Appendix 1.

10. The Commission's report as relevant to Oxfordshire is as follows (page 20 of the report):

"Initial proposals for the Oxfordshire sub-region:

- 77. There are currently six constituencies in the County of Oxfordshire. We are proposing no change to the number of constituencies.*
- 78. Three of the existing constituencies (Henley, Oxford West and Abingdon, and Witney) have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. Of the remaining three constituencies, Banbury and Wantage have electorates above the 5% limit and Oxford East is below the 5% limit.*
- 79. We considered whether we could leave unchanged any of the three existing constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota. We propose no change to the constituency of Witney.*
- 80. To reduce the electorate of the existing Banbury constituency, which is too large, we propose to transfer the wards of Fringford, Launton, and Ambrosden & Chesterton (located in the Borough of Cherwell) to our renamed Henley and Thame constituency. As we have altered the existing Banbury constituency, we propose to rename the constituency Banbury and Bicester to reflect the names of the two largest towns. Our proposed Henley and Thame constituency extends further north than the existing Henley constituency. It extends up to, but does not include, the town of Bicester. In the south of our Henley and Thame constituency, we propose that it includes the ward of Wallingford from the existing Wantage constituency and, to ensure the constituency remains within 5% of the electoral quota, we propose to transfer the wards of Wheatley, Garsington & Horspath, and Sandford & The Wittenhams to our Oxford West and Abingdon constituency. The inclusion of these wards also reflects changes to the local government ward boundaries in the District of South Oxfordshire.*
- 81. The existing Oxford East constituency currently has an electorate below 5% of the electoral quota. In order to increase the number of electors in this constituency, we propose to include the wards of North and St. Margaret's (located in the City of Oxford) in our Oxford East constituency.*
- 82. In order to reflect changes to local government ward boundaries in the District of the Vale of White Horse, we propose that the whole of the Thames ward be included in our Wantage constituency."*

Consultation with party groups

11. The three party groups on the Council have been asked to submit their comments on the BCE's proposals. These are summarised in Appendix 2

The effect of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) on electorates

12. The BCE's review is based on electorates as at 1st December 2015. The issue for Oxford, and other urban areas, is that the electorates on first publishing are not a reflection of the actual people who wish to vote come an electoral event. So electorates are depressed on 1st December but bounce back by the time an election takes place in May or June the following year.

13. The table below shows the differences for the last three registers for the current boundaries of the two constituencies and, in brackets, the proposed constituencies.

	Oxford East	Oxford West and Abingdon (Oxford part)
1st December 2013 - pre-IER	80,345	21,036
1st December 2014 - first register post-IER	72,825	18,858
The following May General Election	79,506 (86,594)	20,780 (13,692)
1st December 2015	70,293 (76,194)	18,431 (12,518)
The following June EU Referendum	76,841 (83,736)	20,240 (13,345)

Financial & Legal Implications

14. There are no financial or legal implications.

Risk Register

15. The risk register is attached as Appendix 3.

What happens next

16. After the current consultation phase finishes on 5th December the BCE will publish all comments. This will mark the start of a secondary consultation period, likely to take place in spring 2017. BCE will subsequently publish its revised proposals. A further eight-week period of consultation will begin.

17. The BCE will then publish its final recommendations which will be considered by Parliament. The legislation states that the BCE must report to Parliament in September 2018.

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Background Papers: BCE Guide to the 2018 Review

Review generally: www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland

The South-east Proposals specifically: <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/node/6488>

Please note in the table below the version number of your report that was finally cleared at each stage

Report Stage	Version Number
First Draft: <i>Commissioned and cleared by Director</i>	5/10
Second Draft: <i>Cleared by Legal and Finance</i>	6/10
Organisational Draft: <i>Cleared by the Chief Executive</i>	
Final Draft: <i>Cleared by the Board Member</i>	
Final Report: <i>Cleared by Labour Group</i>	

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