

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET:**

**WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2017**

**REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**(Contact: Keith Butler, Tel: (01993) 861521)**

**1. PURPOSE**

To update the Cabinet in relation to the above review, and invite it to consider whether it wishes to make representations to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That Cabinet considers supporting the proposals insofar as they relate to the Witney Constituency.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. 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, which is scheduled to be implemented at the first general election after the approval of proposals by parliament, 501 of those constituencies will be in England. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is responsible for reviewing constituencies and drawing up proposals, with a view to submitting its formal report on the review to government.
- 3.2. The expectation, therefore, is for new constituency boundaries to become effective at the next parliamentary general election.
- 3.3. The BCE has produced a [guide to the review](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1457992/BCE-Guide-to-2018-Review.pdf), a copy of which is available on the West Oxfordshire website at <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1457992/BCE-Guide-to-2018-Review.pdf>. Further information about the review as a whole is available on the [BCE website](http://www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland) at [www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland](http://www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland). There is also a separate website for consultation, from which the revised proposals can be accessed - [www.bce2018.org.uk/](http://www.bce2018.org.uk/).

**General Information**

- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. The review is based on the electorate at 1 December 2015, and (i) the electoral quota for each constituency is 74769; and (ii) no constituency shall be more than 105% of that figure, nor less than 95% of it (i.e. all constituencies must have an electorate in the range of 71031 to 78507).
- 3.6. The electorate for the Witney Constituency at 1 December 2015 was 78455, so just within the required range.
- 3.7. 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.

## **Process for the review**

- 3.8. The BCE's initial proposals were published on 13 September 2016. Following the consultation period for that there was a further period during which observations could be made on comments and counter-proposals made in respect of the initial proposals.
- 3.9. Revised proposals were published by BCE on 17 October 2017, and the consultation period runs until 11 December 2017. It is interesting to note that these proposals revise the composition of 41 of the 83 constituencies included in the initial proposals in 2016.
- 3.10. Following this, BCE will submit a formal written report to the government. Parliamentary procedures will then apply for agreeing and implementing the new constituencies.

## **Situation in Oxfordshire and Revised Proposals**

- 3.11. Three of the six existing Oxfordshire constituencies are either above or below the maximum variance from the quota - Banbury, Oxford East, and Wantage.
- 3.12. The revised proposals continue to recommend no change for the Witney Constituency, and it seems unlikely that that will change following this stage of the review process.
- 3.13. As mentioned above, the revised BCE proposals were published on Tuesday 17 October. The proposals for Oxfordshire are explained on pages 34 to 36 of the [revised South East Region proposals document](#), and provide for (i) changes to each of the five constituencies other than Witney; and (ii) changes in the names of three of the constituencies which, if approved, will create constituencies of Oxford; Abingdon and Oxford North; and East Oxfordshire, instead of Oxford East; West and Abingdon; and Henley respectively.
- 3.14. In these circumstances it is envisaged that the Cabinet will wish to continue to support the proposals insofar as they relate to the Witney Constituency/West Oxfordshire District.

### **3. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report has no financial implications

### **5. RISKS**

There are no risks associated with the decision whether to submit any views during this consultation stage.

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Date: 19 October 2017

#### Background Papers:

BCE Guide to the 2018 Review, available at

<http://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>

BCE Initial and Revised Proposals for the South East, available at [www.bce2018.org.uk/](http://www.bce2018.org.uk/)