
THE 2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

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Purpose of this report

This report sets out the initial proposals by the Boundary Committee for England on the current review of the Parliamentary constituencies for England

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England; and
2. Consider whether to accept the initial proposals or to formulate a revised scheme for the constituencies contained within the Central Bedfordshire Council area as part of the consultation process.

Background

1. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
2. The BCE has the task of periodically reviewing all of the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of the rules set by Parliament in 2011. The new rules result in a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 501), and require that every constituency, apart from two specified exceptions, must have an electorate that is no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507.
3. The BCE is required to make a formal report to the Government in September 2018; recommending any changes that it believes are

appropriate to the distribution, size, shape, name or designation of constituencies in England.

4. The government will turn the recommendations of the BCE into draft legislation, which is then presented to Parliament. If Parliament approves the legislation, the recommended changes will be implemented at the next General Election scheduled for 2020. Any by-elections held in the meantime will have to be held on the basis of the old (existing) constituencies.

Timetable for the review

5. The review will take place over two and a half years to ensure that the recommendations made are thorough and take public views into account. The timetable for the review is:
 - 13 September 2016 Initial proposals published
 - 13 September to 5 December 2016 Initial consultation period
 - 7 & 8 November 2016 Eastern Region Public Hearing (Luton Borough Council)
 - Spring 2017 Secondary consultation period (publication of all responses received to the initial proposals). During the four week secondary consultation period further representations can be made but only on the responses to the initial proposals
 - Towards the end of 2017 If the evidence presented at the secondary consultation period warrants revised proposals for the area concerned a further consultation of 8 weeks will be introduced

The base data for the Review

6. The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) 'the Act' provides that the electorate figures that are to be used for a review are those that were in the version of the electoral register published on the 'review date'. This is defined by the Act as the date two years and ten months before the review is required to report to the Government. For the 2018 Review, this means that the electorate figures used must be those from the electoral registers that were required to be published on or before 1 December 2015.

The distribution of constituencies

7. The Act now requires there to be a fixed number of 600 constituencies for the whole of the UK. Having stated that no single constituency may be split between different parts of the UK, the Act provides a mathematical formula to determine how many constituencies each of the four parts of the UK should be allocated, based on the electorate figures as at the review date. The number of constituencies allocated to England for the 2018 Review is 501. Two of these constituencies are expressly reserved for the Isle of Wight.
8. The Eastern Region has been allocated 57 constituencies, a reduction of one. The proposals for Bedfordshire are contained in Appendix A
9. The impact of the proposals of the revised constituencies within Central Bedfordshire Council area is shown at Appendix B together with a map at Appendix C which identifies each ward and its potential constituency.

Council Priorities

10. Not applicable

Legal Implications

11. The process described in the report is prescribed in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992 and the Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011). The Boundary Commission is required to review the parliamentary constituencies in accordance with the provisions of the Act and to submit a report to the Government in September 2018. Central Bedfordshire Council has no formal role in the statutory process.

Financial and Risk Implications

12. None specifically arising from this report but there are significant costs in administering an election; some of which are outwith the control of the Acting Returning Officer specifically when local elections are combined with national elections.

Equalities Implications

13. None specifically arising from the report as the review and the subsequent proposals are those of an external body. However, achieving a more even distribution of electoral representation in every constituency in England will provide an opportunity for fairer political representation.

Conclusion

14. The effects of the proposals for Central Bedfordshire are that the electorate would be served by 5 MP's instead of the current 4. However, the anomalies that currently exist whereby the wards of Arlesey, Northill and Caddington are served by two different MP's have been removed.
15. The BCE actively promotes participation in the consultation process and welcomes written or oral representations made at public hearings for against the proposals.

Appendices

Appendix A – extract from the BCE 'Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the Eastern Region'

Appendix B – Parliamentary Constituencies – Initial Proposals: Impact on Central Bedfordshire

Appendix C – Central Bedfordshire Ward and Parish Boundaries (Map)

Background Papers

None