

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

22 JULY 2021

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Report Title	PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023			
Purpose of Report	To ensure that the Council responds to the consultation on 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: a. Note the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England; and b. Approve the draft Council response to the consultation			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has been held with Alliance Group Leaders			
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Options	The Council is not compelled to respond to the consultation, however this is an opportunity to respond to the BCE with written comments. Members have the opportunity to feedback their responses on the initial proposals directly to the Boundary Commission for England.			
Background Papers	The proposed changes can be found at https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/ and the proposals for the South West can be found via this link			
Appendices	None			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** 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.
- 1.2** Following the passing of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 in December 2020, and the publication of the relevant parliamentary electorate data in January 2021, the BCE have begun a review of all parliamentary constituencies in England. The BCE are required to report their final recommendations by 1 July 2023.
- 1.3** As part of the review, the BCE is holding a public consultation for 8 weeks from 8 June 2021 to 2 August 2021. Everyone is encouraged to respond to the consultation to help shape the

new constituencies. Those who respond to the consultation are requested to say whether they approve of, or object to, the BCE's proposals. In particular, objectors are advised to say what they propose in place of the BCE's proposals, objections accompanied by a viable counterproposal are likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection. The Council has been promoting the consultation on its communications channels and has also contacted all parish and town Councils. There is no requirement for SDC to issue a response but it would be good practice to do so.

2. INITIAL PROPOSALS

- 2.1** The number of parliamentary seats in England is increasing from 533 to 543 and the number of seats in the South West region is increasing from 55 to 58, the review will decide how to divide these seats between England's parliamentary constituencies.
- 2.2** The BCE is required to ensure that each proposed constituency has an electorate as at the 2 March 2020 that is no less than 95% and not 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.
- 2.3** The legislation states that, when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may take into account:
 - 2.3.1 Special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - 2.3.2 Local government boundaries which existed on the 1 December 2020;
 - 2.3.3 Boundaries of existing constituencies;
 - 2.3.4 Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies; and
 - 2.3.5 The inconveniences attendant on such changes.

3. PROPOSALS FOR THE STROUD CONSTITUENCY

- 3.1** It has not been possible for the BCE to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, therefore some county council and unitary authority areas have been grouped into sub-regions. Gloucestershire and Wiltshire has been grouped into a sub-region with an allocation of 14 constituencies (an increase of one).
- 3.2** The BCE states that the existing Stroud constituency is too large to remain unchanged with an electorate of 84,573. The majority of the wards in the District are unaffected and are proposed to remain in the same Parliamentary constituency at the next elections. The BCE has however, recommended that:
 - 3.2.1 The District wards of Hardwicke, Painswick & Upton, Bisley and Chalford are transferred to The Cotswolds constituency.
 - 3.2.2 Minchinhampton ward remains in The Cotswold constituency.
 - 3.2.3 The wards of Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge are transferred from The Cotswolds constituency to the Stroud Constituency.
- 3.3** This results in Minchinhampton, Hardwicke, Painswick & Upton, Bisley and Chalford wards forming part of The Cotswolds constituency and all other twenty-two district wards will make up the Stroud constituency.
- 3.4** When considering a response to the consultation, it is worth noting that considerable changes are being proposed for The Cotswold constituency with the boundary being

extended westwards to include seven wards from the existing Tewkesbury constituency together with the four wards from the Stroud constituency. Twenty wards from the existing The Cotswolds constituency would then be included in a new cross-county boundary constituency together with seven wards from the existing North Wiltshire constituency with the proposed name of Cirencester and North Wiltshire constituency.

4. DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

- 4.1** It is expected that political parties will wish to respond to the consultation with their own views and it is therefore proposed that the council responds with the following:
- 4.2** 'Stroud District Council is largely in support of the Boundary Commission for England's proposals and we are pleased that the initial proposals do not recommend the local authority area to be split between three different constituencies as recommended in the previous review. We also welcome the fact that this new proposal no longer contains any element of joining with constituencies outside the County Boundary of Gloucestershire.
- 4.3** However, there is concern that the proposal to transfer the wards of Hardwicke, Painswick and Upton, Bisley and Chalford to The Cotswolds constituency does not reflect local ties or geographical factors such as shape and accessibility. This is particularly the case for Hardwicke ward which has far stronger ties with Gloucester City than it does The Cotswolds. In addition, the wards of Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood have built local ties with The Cotswold constituency and the transfer of these wards to the Stroud constituency will break these ties. However, as these wards are within the Stroud District, are closer geographically to Stroud than Cirencester and were historically in the Stroud Constituency, it is also recognised that there will be strong affiliation with the Stroud constituency. As already stated, it is welcomed that all wards remain within Gloucestershire Constituencies.

It is understood that the Council's response will be strengthened if alternative proposals can be suggested. Due to the substantial changes being proposed for The Cotswolds constituency and the proposed creation of the Cirencester and North Wiltshire constituency it is very difficult for the Council to suggest alternative arrangements that do not impact a number of constituency boundaries and ensure the key criteria stipulated (such as electorate range) can be met. The Council therefore asks the BCE to acknowledge these concerns and depending on the strength of feeling in other submissions made, consider if there are any alternative arrangements.'

5. NEXT STAGES FOR THE REVIEW

- 5.1** A secondary consultation period will take place in early 2022. The purpose is for people to see what others have said in response to the initial proposals and to make comments on those reviews. The BCE will then host between two and five public hearings in each region for views to be given directly to one of the assistant commissioners. The Commission will analyse the representations from the initial and secondary consultation periods and if the evidence presented persuades the BCE to change the initial proposals, revised proposals will be published and consulted upon for four weeks.
- 5.2** Following the conclusion of all three consultation periods, the Commission will look at all the evidence received before forming its final recommendations.

- 5.3** The Commission must submit its final report and recommendations to the Speaker of the House of Commons by July 2023 and the new parliamentary constituencies will be used at the next General Election after the completion of the review.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

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6.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

One Legal

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6.3 Equality Implications

This report is to note the review and respond to the consultation, the Boundary Commission for England will carry out an appropriate impact assessment.

6.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.