

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2021
Subject:	Initial Proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South West Region
Report of:	Head of Democratic Services
Corporate Lead:	Borough Solicitor
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Corporate Governance
Number of Appendices:	Seven

Executive Summary:

To advise Members of the Boundary Commission's initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sub-region.

Recommendation:

To consider what, if any, representation the Committee may wish to make on the Boundary Commission's proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sub-region.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To provide Members with the opportunity to make representations on the proposals should they wish to do so.

Resource Implications:

Not applicable.

Legal Implications:

Not applicable.

Risk Management Implications:

Not applicable.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Not applicable.

Environmental Implications:

Not applicable.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Boundary Commission for England is currently conducting a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries on the basis of rules most recently updated by Parliament in 2020. These rules require that constituencies must have no fewer than 69,724 electors and no more than 77,062 but the Commission may also take into account:

- special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency.
- local government boundaries which existed, or were prospective on 1 December 2020.
- boundaries of existing constituencies.
- any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.
- the inconveniences attendant on such changes.

2.0 THE TIMETABLE

2.1 The Commission published its initial proposals on 8 June 2021 and is consulting on them for a period of eight weeks until 2 August 2021. The Commission is then required to publish all the responses received on its initial proposals and this publication will mark the start of a six-week secondary consultation period which is currently planned to take place in early 2022. There will also be public hearings in each region where representations can be made directly to an Assistant Commissioner.

2.2 The representations and comments from both the initial and secondary consultation periods will then be analysed and the Commission will decide whether changes should be made to their initial proposals. This being the case, any revised proposals must be consulted upon for a further period of four weeks; this is likely to be towards the end of 2022. The Commission must then submit its final report and recommendations to the Speaker of the House of Commons by 1 July 2023. The Speaker will then lay the recommendations before the House on behalf of the Commission.

3.0 THE SOUTH WEST REGION

3.1 The South West region comprises; the County Council area of Gloucestershire; the unitary authority areas of Wiltshire and Swindon, the four unitary authority areas of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, the County Council area of Somerset, the County Council area of Dorset and the unitary authority area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; the County Council area of Devon and the unitary authority areas of Plymouth and Torbay; and the unitary authority areas of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

3.2 The region currently has 55 constituencies. Of these constituencies, only 23 have electorates within the permitted electorate range. The Commission's initial proposal for the South West region is for 58 constituencies, an increase of three. In order to achieve this the Commission has grouped local authorities into sub-regions.

3.3 Gloucestershire's electorate of 483,442 results in a mathematical entitlement of 6.59 constituencies. This is too large for six whole constituencies, and too small for seven. The Commission, therefore, proposes a pairing with Wiltshire to create a sub-region.

4.0 INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND WILTSHIRE SUB-REGION

- 4.1** There are currently 13 constituencies in the area covered by this sub-region with a combined mathematical entitlement to 13.86 constituencies. The Commission's initial proposals allocate 14 constituencies to the sub-region, an increase of one. This includes a cross-county boundary constituency that extends along most of the boundary between Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.
- 4.2** With an electorate of 81,509, the existing Gloucester constituency is too large to form a single constituency and thus needs to be reduced in order to bring it within the permitted electorate range. The Commission considered the possibility of transferring three wards that form the community of Quedgeley to The Cotswolds constituency, however, felt that transferring wards from the north of Gloucester city to the Tewkesbury constituency would better satisfy the statutory factors. The City of Gloucester ward of Longlevens is currently within the Tewkesbury constituency and it is proposed that it should remain and be joined by the City of Gloucester wards of Elmbridge and Barnwood. Consideration was given to including the City of Gloucester ward of Kingsholm & Wotton in the Tewkesbury constituency, rather than the Barnwood ward, but the Commission was of the view that Kingsholm & Wotton had a particularly strong association with the Gloucester identity, containing half of Gloucester railway station, the council offices, the Premiership rugby club and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. See map shown at Appendix 1.
- 4.3** The electorate of the existing Cheltenham constituency is at 79,980 above the permitted electorate range. The Cheltenham borough wards of Prestbury and Swindon Village are currently included in the existing Tewkesbury constituency. It is proposed that they should remain with the addition of the Springbank ward in order to bring the Cheltenham constituency within the permitted electorate range. See map shown at Appendix 2.
- 4.4** At 83,818 the electorate of the existing Tewkesbury constituency is above the permitted range. The Commission's proposal for the constituencies of Gloucester and Cheltenham would further increase the electorate size by including one more ward from the Borough of Cheltenham and two additional wards from the City of Gloucester. To bring the constituency within the permitted electorate range, the Commission propose the transfer of seven Tewkesbury Borough wards from the existing Tewkesbury constituency, including the Winchcombe and Isbourne wards, together with the wards of Badgeworth, Brockworth East and West, Churchdown Brookfield with Hucclecote and Shurdington that form the geographical area between the proposed constituencies of Gloucester and Cheltenham to the proposed The Cotswolds constituency. See map shown at Appendix 3.
- 4.5** The existing Forest of Dean constituency is the only constituency in the County of Gloucestershire within the permitted electorate range which the Commission proposes should remain unchanged. The constituency currently comprises the Tewkesbury Borough ward of Highnam with Haw Bridge. See map shown at Appendix 4.
- 4.6** The existing Stroud constituency is too large to remain unchanged, with an electorate of 84,573. In order to bring the Stroud constituency within the permitted electorate range it is proposed that four of the Stroud wards, Hardwicke, Painswick & Upton, Bisley and Chalford be transferred to The Cotswolds constituency. These changes would result in the Stroud constituency falling below the permitted electorate range and therefore it is proposed to expand the existing constituency southwards to include the two Stroud district wards of Kingswood & Wotton-under-Edge. See map shown at Appendix 5.

4.7 The boundaries of The Cotswolds constituency are proposed to change significantly extending westwards to include seven wards from Tewkesbury Borough and four wards from Stroud. See map shown at Appendix 6.

4.8 Twenty wards from the existing The Cotswolds constituency, including the town of Cirencester would be included in the new cross-county boundary constituency, together with seven wards from the existing North Wiltshire constituency, including the town of Malmesbury: the A429 road links both of these towns. It is proposed that this constituency be named Cirencester and North Wiltshire. See map shown at Appendix 7.

4.9 The remainder of the sub-region constituencies solely affect the County of Wiltshire.

5.0 RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSALS

5.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to make any response to the consultation proposals. In terms of administration the proposed Tewkesbury constituency will be extremely complex to administer, losing parts of the Borough to the Forest of Dean and The Cotswold constituencies and taking in areas from Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City Councils. This is also very confusing for the electorate to understand why they are receiving voting paperwork from Local Authorities which they do not fall under for day-to-day services and the payment of Council Tax. It is also difficult to understand how this fits in with the Council's growth agenda and will result in the Borough being represented by three different MPs. Clearly the overriding factor, from the Government's perspective is the size of electorate, as in terms of connectivity and community identity it is difficult to see any affinity between areas like Brockworth to the Cotswolds and areas such as Springbank to Tewkesbury.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

10.1 Not applicable.

11.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

11.1 Not applicable.

12.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

12.1 Not applicable.

13.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

13.1 Not applicable.

Background Papers: Boundary Commission for England – Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South West Region

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Appendices:

1. Map for Gloucester constituency.
2. Map for Cheltenham constituency.
3. Map for Tewkesbury constituency.
4. Map for Forest of Dean constituency.
5. Map for Stroud constituency.
6. Map for The Cotswolds constituency.
7. Map for new Cirencester and North Wiltshire constituency.