

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Policy and Resources	6 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk and Remembrancer	<b>For decision</b>
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### Summary

The Boundary Commission for England has published its initial proposals for the 2016–18 review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. The Commission proposes that the current Cities of London and Westminster constituency be retained, covering the same area as at present, with the addition of one extra ward of the City of Westminster and two wards of the Borough of Camden.

The position of the City Corporation at the last boundary review was to support the long-standing constituency link between the City of London and the City of Westminster, on the basis that the two cities share a number of common circumstances and interests to a greater extent than they do with adjacent areas. The considerations which underpinned this position remain current, and it is therefore proposed that the link with Westminster be supported again in the present review.

The initial proposals are subject to extensive consultation and could undergo significant revisions. It is therefore desirable to engage in the process even if the proposals are in keeping with the City Corporation's position. It is also proposed to publicise the review so that local residents, businesses, and organisations are aware of the proposals and how they can respond.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to authorise—

- 1) the Town Clerk and the Remembrancer to draw up for the consideration of the Committee a written representation on the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission, supporting the retention of the constituency link between the City of London and the City of Westminster;
- 2) the Town Clerk to take appropriate measures to make local residents, businesses and organisations aware of the proposals and of the consultation process.

## **Main Report**

### The 2016–18 Boundary Review

1. The Boundary Commission for England has published its initial proposals for the 2016–18 review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. This commences a lengthy process of consultation and deliberation, which will culminate in a parliamentary vote in September 2018.
2. The review is the second to be begun under the rules laid down by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. If carried to completion it will be the first to be implemented, the 2011–13 review having been aborted as a result of a legislative defeat suffered by the then Government in the House of Lords.
3. The new rules differ from the previous rules in that the number of constituencies is fixed at 600 (a reduction from the current 650), and the number of electors in each constituency must be within five per cent of the national average (the so-called 'electoral quota'). Reviews are also now required to take place every five years, meaning that each General Election will, in the usual course of events, take place with a new set of constituencies.
4. The changes to the rules mean that the present review will involve an unusual degree of disruption to existing constituencies. In London, the number of constituencies will be reduced from 73 to 68. The strict arithmetical criteria which must be satisfied by the revised constituencies mean that the Boundary Commission has less scope to give effect to considerations such as existing boundaries and local ties.
5. The review is politically controversial. The Conservative party is expected to benefit from constituencies with more equal electorates, as seats held by it currently contain higher than average numbers of electors. The Labour party supports the principle of more equal electorates but argues that it is disadvantaged by the under-registration of eligible electors in areas that are more likely to support it.
6. Consultation will now take place on the initial proposals until 5<sup>th</sup> December. Interested parties may submit written representations and a number of public hearings will be held at which oral representations may be made. A further four-week consultation period will follow in the spring of 2017, during which representations on the initial proposals will be made public and others will have the opportunity to comment on them. The Commission will publish revised proposals towards the end of 2017, on which consultation will take place for eight weeks. A final report will be made to the Government in September 2018 and will have to be supported by a vote of both Houses of Parliament if it is to be implemented.

### The City's position

7. The Commission's initial proposals would see the current Cities of London and Westminster constituency be retained, covering the same area as at

present, with the addition of one extra ward of the City of Westminster and two wards of the Borough of Camden. The inclusion of additional wards is necessary in order to satisfy the new electoral quota.

8. These proposals differ from the initial proposals for the 2011–13 review, under which the City would have been paired with Islington South to form a new constituency. On that occasion, the City Corporation made representations against the initial proposals and in support of retaining the constituency link with Westminster. This position (which was shared by the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties) was accepted by the Boundary Commission in its revised proposals, published shortly before the abandonment of the review.
9. The City Corporation's support of the link with Westminster was based on the view that the two cities shared a number of common circumstances and interests to a greater extent than they did with adjacent areas. In particular, the following points were made in the representation:
  - The City of London has been combined with Westminster ever since it lost its separate parliamentary representation in 1948.
  - The two cities have a strong historical relationship as the original part of the Metropolis, and influenced each other's political and institutional development.
  - The two cities play host to a high concentration of financial and professional services activity.
  - The City of London has an increasingly prominent role in the sort of retail and cultural activities typically centred on Westminster.
  - The two cities accommodate large numbers of visitors.
  - The two cities share a valuable architectural heritage.
  - There are strong and important transport links between the two cities.
  - The two cities face significant security challenges, having in recent years been the focus of large-scale protests and attendant disorder.
  - The two cities share a strong civic and ceremonial tradition, for instance in the hosting of foreign Heads of State.
10. The considerations outlined above remain current. It is accordingly proposed that the City Corporation once again support the retention of the constituency link between the two cities, by means of a written representation to the Boundary Commission. If the Committee agrees, a draft of this representation will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its meeting in November.

11. It is desirable to engage in the consultation process even if the City Corporation's representations would on this occasion be in keeping with, rather than opposed to, the Boundary Commission's initial proposals. The 2011–13 review saw considerable changes made between the initial and revised proposals. The constraints under which the review operates mean that changes made in one area can have knock-on effects in other areas. The Boundary Commission has itself noted the risk that its perception of public feeling may be distorted by the greater tendency of people to speak against proposals which they oppose than in favour of those which they support.
12. During the 2011–13 review, efforts were made to raise local awareness of the Boundary Commission's initial proposals and to inform residents, businesses and organisations of the means by which they could respond. These efforts led to a large number of representations being made to the Commission (most of which were in support of the retention of the link with Westminster), by residents, City workers, and bodies such as ward clubs and professional associations. While the proposals are now consistent with the Corporation's position as previously expressed, for the reason given in paragraph 11 it is proposed that suitable awareness-raising activity take place on this occasion to make local residents, businesses and organisations aware of the proposals and of the consultation process.
13. A number of individual Members also submitted representations to the previous review. The Town Clerk will inform Members of the means by which they may do so on this occasion.

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