

**Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary  
Commission for England Consultation**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Ryan O’Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

The report sets out a proposed response to the Boundary Commission for England’s consultation on new Parliamentary constituencies.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

That the consultation response at Appendix 1 be agreed.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	27 July 2021

# Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary Commission for England Consultation

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	There are no direct impacts on the Council’s corporate priorities, but the ability of the Council to run effective parliamentary elections is important for Council reputation. The ability to operate effectively with local MPs could also have an indirect impact on Council objectives.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	There are no direct impacts on the Council’s cross cutting objectives. The ability to operate effectively with local MPs could have an indirect impact on Council objectives.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks relating to making the consultation response are considered to minimal and within the Council’s risk appetite. Risks as they relate to elections, through the additional complexities inherent in three constituencies are discussed in the proposed response.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Financial</b>	None.  Additional funding would be provided by the Cabinet Office for the running of an additional constituency election during a parliamentary election.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	None.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Legal</b>	The provisions related to the BCE procedures are within The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1886, as amended and the implications are as set out in the body of the report.	Principal Solicitor Contentious and Corporate Governance

<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	None.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Equalities</b>	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Procurement</b>	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is currently undertaking a consultation on its revised Parliamentary Constituency proposals for England. The consultation ends on 2 August 2021.
- 2.2 The BCE set out the context of their consultation on their website:

*“Following the passing of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 in December 2020, and the publication of the relevant Parliamentary electorate data in January 2021, we began a new review of all Parliamentary constituencies in England. We refer to this as the ‘2023 Review’, as we are required to report with our final recommendations by 1 July 2023.*

*Applying the statutory formula to the electorate figures means the total 650 constituencies is distributed during the review to the four parts of the UK as follows:*

*England = 543 (includes two ‘protected’ constituencies on the Isle of Wight);  
Scotland = 57 (includes two ‘protected’ constituencies for specified Scottish islands);  
Wales = 32 (includes one ‘protected’ constituency on the Isle of Anglesey); and  
Northern Ireland = 18”*

- 2.3 For the South East this breaks down as 91 constituencies, an increase of seven on the current number.
- 2.4 The key element of electorate restrictions for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries is as follows:

*"Application of further statutory rules to the published electorate also means that all recommended constituencies must have no less than 69,724 Parliamentary electors and no more than 77,062 (except those 'protected' constituencies mentioned above). By law, these electorate figures relate to the electorates as they were on 2 March 2020."*

- 2.5 The remaining stages of the BCE timetable for the review are:
- **8 June 2021:** Publish initial proposals and conduct eight-week written consultation;
  - Early 2022: Publish responses to initial proposals and conduct six-week 'secondary consultation', including between two and five public hearings in each region;
  - Late 2022: Publish revised proposals and conduct four-week written consultation;
  - June 2023: Submit and publish final report and recommendations.

## 2.6 **The Proposals**

The review and consultation can be found here:

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/>

And the three proposed constituencies are attached at Appendices 2 to 4.

- 2.7 Appendix 1 sets out officers' recommended response to these proposals, which is to object and suggest principles to create two constituencies to better help the people of Maidstone, and not split the Borough across three areas as this creates additional issues on community identity and election complexities in particular. A specific proposal is also put forward to provide a solid alternative and demonstrate the application of the principles.

## 2.8 **Requirements of the Response**

The BCE in its guide to the review sets out how it would like responses to be given in this consultation:

*"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. An objection accompanied by a viable counterproposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection." In this respect – and particularly in light of the importance of Rule 2 (statutory electorate range) – a counterproposal setting out the composition of each*

*constituency in an area will generally be viewed as more persuasive than a proposal for the composition of only one constituency which does not address any knock-on effects on the electorate figures of neighbouring constituencies.”*

- 2.9 Officers have looked at the interactive boundary maps, which is a comprehensive tool, and have produced a specific proposal to build on the principles set out. However, whilst the proposed solutions are viable, and arguably an improvement on current arrangements for Maidstone, it is acknowledged that there will be knock on impacts for other constituencies.
- 2.10 The proposed alternative therefore is to put forward a broad alternative of establishing principles for any constituencies for Maidstone, and to provide a specific proposal demonstrating the application of them. The principles of an acceptable proposal are for one that:
1. Is as close to the BCE’s own mathematical calculation of 1.64 constituencies being appropriate for Maidstone Borough (i.e. 2 constituencies) as possible
  2. That the urban area of Maidstone be kept as whole as possible given the community identity it represents and the benefit this would bring to a single MP for the Town
  3. That the rural areas of Maidstone be kept as close to a whole as possible given their linkages locally, whilst recognising their differences, and the benefit this would bring for a single MP for the rural parts of the Borough
  4. That these constituencies be supplemented as required from interconnected areas – i.e. practical urban extensions to Maidstone to the West and North West for the Urban area, and Southern/South Western parts of the Weald and areas with connections for the Rural area.

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Option 1 – To agree the consultation response, objecting to the proposed constituencies, outlined at Appendix 1, adding any contributions Members may wish to emphasise or make.
- 3.2 Option 2 – To not object and submit a consultation response in support of the proposals. This is not recommended for the reasons outlined in the proposed response.
- 3.3 Option 3 – Not submit a consultation response – this is not recommended as it is important to express the views of local areas in order to inform the review and produce a better outcome for the Borough of Maidstone.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1 – for the reasons set out in the proposed response.
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## **5. RISK**

5.1 The risks relating to making the consultation response are considered to be minimal and within the Council's risk appetite. Risks as they relate to elections, through the additional complexities inherent in three constituencies are discussed in the proposed response.

## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

6.1 None

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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 The response will be submitted to the consultation by the deadline of 2 August 2021.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Proposed Consultation Response
  - Appendices 2 - 4: Proposed Constituency Boundaries
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/guide-to-the-2023-review-of-parliamentary-constituencies/>