

RESPONSE TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY OF NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

Submitted by: Head of Central Services – Paul Clisby

Portfolio: Customer Service and Transformation

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

Further to Standing Order 5(2), five Members of the Council have called an Extraordinary Meeting to consider alternative proposals to those put forward by the Boundary Commission for the Parliamentary Constituency of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Recommendation

This is a background paper giving the context to the Boundary Commission Review and setting out the Motion which has been submitted.

1. Background

1.1 The Boundary Commission have been required by legislation to carry out a review of parliamentary constituencies to be used for the first time at the General Election in 2015. They are required to reduce the number of English constituencies from 533 to 502 each of which must have a constituency of between 72,810 and 80,473. The Commission may take account of:

- (a) special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- (b) local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010;
- (c) boundaries of existing constituencies; and
- (d) any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

However, none of these factors override the necessity to achieve the size of constituencies as set out above. The Commission states it has used the 2010 Local Government boundaries districts and wards as the building blocks of their initial proposals and sought to retain existing constituencies where possible.

1.2 The Commission is consulting on its proposals until 5 December 2011. It will then publish the representations it has received and there will be an opportunity to make further representations commenting on the representations received. At this stage the Commission may revise its initial proposals which will lead to a further consultation process. When the Commission's proposals are finalised they will go as recommendations to Parliament.

1.3 Initial Proposals for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Sub-region

There are currently 12 constituencies in this sub-region, four of which (Burton, Cannock Chase, Lichfield and South Staffordshire) have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. The electorates of the remaining constituencies in this area are all below the 5% limit. The

Commission considered whether they could leave unchanged any of the existing constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota.

In developing proposals in which all the constituency electorates are within 5% of the electoral quota, they propose to keep the three constituencies of Burton, Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire unchanged.

They propose to allocate 11 constituencies to this sub-region, a reduction of one from the current arrangement.

The electorate of the District of Staffordshire Moorlands allowed them to propose a constituency which contains the whole of the District of Staffordshire Moorlands, and no wards from another district, by including five wards from the existing Stone constituency.

The Newchapel ward of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme has been included in a new Kidsgrove and Tunstall constituency, from the existing Staffordshire Moorlands constituency.

The Commissioners considered that the electorate of the City of Stoke-on-Trent is too small to allow for three whole constituencies to be created within its boundary. In respecting the southern boundary of the City of Stoke-on-Trent, they propose a largely unchanged Stoke-on-Trent South constituency, save for the inclusion of the Stoke and Trent Vale ward from the existing Stoke-on-Trent Central constituency.

The three City of Stoke-on-Trent wards (Burslem South, East Valley, and Norton and Bradeley) have been included in the Stoke-on-Trent Central constituency from the existing Stoke-on-Trent North constituency.

The Commissioners propose a new Kidsgrove and Tunstall constituency which has been created from the remaining seven wards of the existing Stoke-on-Trent North constituency and six wards of the existing Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency. Also the single ward of Madeley of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme has been included from the existing Stone constituency.

Their proposed Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stone constituency contains the remaining wards from the existing constituency of Newcastle-under-Lyme and seven of the wards in the existing Stone constituency, which no longer exists under their proposals. It consists of most of the towns of Newcastle under-Lyme, and Stone and its surrounding area.

They propose a new Stafford constituency which contains all of the existing Stafford constituency, apart from the one Borough of Stafford ward of Haywood and Hixon, which is now included in the Lichfield constituency. The proposed Stafford constituency also contains five wards from the existing Stone constituency.

Finally the Commissioners consider that there are minor changes to the existing constituencies of Lichfield and Tamworth. The existing constituency of Tamworth is largely unaltered, apart from the inclusion of the Hammerwich ward of the District of Lichfield from the existing Lichfield constituency. The ward of Haywood and Hixon of the Borough of Stafford has been included in the proposed Lichfield constituency from the Stafford constituency, as described above. The Commission's proposals and a map of those proposals are attached at Appendix A and B respectively.

2. **Issues**

2.1 The following motion has been proposed:-

This Council:

- (1) Confirms the resolution of 16 October to fight to ensure that the old Newcastle Borough and its associated rural area remains a single constituency
- (2) Recognises that an MP with sole responsibility for the old Borough of Newcastle is the most effective way of safeguarding the interests of the Borough
- (3) Deplores the proposal to put Holditch and Cross Heath, Porthill and Wolstanton into separate constituencies
- (4) Deplores the inclusion of rural villages to the west of the Borough in a Tunstall/Kidsgrove based constituency
- (5) Deplores the lack of community cohesion in these proposals
- (6) Considers there are alternatives that meet Boundary Commission requirements and take greater account of communities
- (7) Requests the Commission implements the attached proposed alternative designed to protect the interests of Newcastle-under-Lyme
- (8) Mandates the Chief Executive to submit any proposals from this meeting to the Boundary Commission.

The alternative proposal is appended at C.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Members may adopt the motion as proposed or amended or reject it.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 The views of Council are sought.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

Not applicable.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

Not applicable.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council is empowered to act as a consultee in this matter.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 Parliament carries out appropriate impact assessments on legislation. It is open to Members to raise any particular issues in the debate.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 All costs relating to this matter are met out of existing budgets.

10. **Major Risks**

Not applicable.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

Full Council 16 October 2011

14. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - The Boundary Commission's initial proposals for Staffordshire

Appendix B - The Boundary Commission's proposal map

Appendix C - The Alternative Proposal submitted

15. **Background Papers**

None.