

Committee: Standards and General Purposes

Date: 3 November 2016

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Council's proposed response to the 2018 Boundary Review of Parliamentary constituencies consultation

Lead officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director Corporate Governance

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Contact officer: John Dimmer, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships / Andrew Robertson, Head of Electoral Services

Recommendations: That the Standards and General Purposes Committee

- A. Note the details of the initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in London that are out for consultation and consider the implications for the London Borough of Merton.
 - B. Approve the London Borough of Merton's response to the consultation.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. On the basis of the rules set by Parliament in 2011, the Boundary Commission are tasked with periodically reviewing the boundaries of all Parliamentary constituencies. This report provides the Standards and General Purposes Committee with details of the Boundary Commission's initial proposals that that are out for consultation. These would take effect in September 2018.
- 1.2. This report also sets out for the Committee the London Borough of Merton's proposed response to the consultation. This response will be to strongly urge the Boundary Commission to reassess their initial proposals, which we believe will have a negative impact on the residents of Merton in terms of representation and partnership working and on the local communities that make up the borough. The response to the consultation will outline the view that in Merton's case, the boundary commission has failed to meet its own criteria in developing the proposals that affect the borough and that the borough is disproportionately affected when compared to London and in particular its neighbouring boroughs in South West London. It is proposed that the Council responds to the Boundary Commission setting out its objections to the current proposals.

2 DETAILS

Background

- 2.1. The Boundary Commission is currently making recommendations on new Parliamentary constituency boundaries for September 2018. This will involve a reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to

501 with the requirement that they must have an electorate no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507 using the tolerance level of plus or minus 5%.

- 2.2. Under the legislation for the 2018 Review, the Boundary Commission is required to base its proposals on the number of electors whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors as at 1 December 2015.
- 2.3. Initial proposals will be consulted on for a 12 week period during which all stakeholders and interested parties are free to make representations. The deadline is the 5 December. Revised proposals will then be published sometime in 2017, followed by a four week period of discussion before the Boundary Commission produce their final proposals to go to Parliament for approval by September 2018.

Proposed changes for London

- 2.4. The London region has been allocated 68 constituencies – a reduction of five from the current number. Proposals leave four of the 73 existing constituencies unchanged.
- 2.5. Constituencies have been grouped into sub-regions; north of the Thames and south of the Thames. The number allocated to each sub-region has been determined by the electorate of the combined boroughs. To comply with the electoral quota it is proposed that 38 constituencies cross London borough boundaries. Of these, 36 contain part of two London boroughs, and two contain parts of three or more London boroughs.
- 2.6. As well as the primary rule around constituency numbers, legislation also states that, when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may also take into account:
 - special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015;
 - boundaries of existing constituencies; and
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

Proposed changes for Merton

- 2.7. Merton currently has two constituencies, (Mitcham and Morden, Wimbledon), which are wholly within the borough of Merton. Merton is the sole borough administering elections for both constituencies.
- 2.8. Under the new proposals Merton's wards are to be divided between five different constituencies. Merton would only retain lead borough status for one constituency. Please see the table below.

Name of new constituency	Merton wards within new constituency	Wards from other boroughs	Electorate	Lead Borough
Merton and Wimbledon Central	Abbey, Cannon Hill, Colliers Wood, Cricket Green, Dundonald, Hillside, Lavender Fields, Merton Park, Ravensbury, Raynes Park, Trinity, West Barnes	None	77,100	Merton
Streatham and Mitcham	Figge's Marsh, Longthornton, Pollards Hill	5 wards from Lambeth and 1 from Croydon	73,925	Lambeth
Sutton and Cheam	Lower Morden, St Helier	All other wards are from Sutton	73,858	Sutton
Tooting	Graveney	All other wards are from Wandsworth	77,288	Wandsworth
Wimbledon Common and Putney	Village, Wimbledon Park	All other wards are from Wandsworth	72,489	Wandsworth

Representation from Merton Council to the Boundary Commission

- 2.9. The previous review of constituency boundaries that took place in 2011 proposed that Merton be divided across four constituencies. Following a period of consultation this was revised to Merton being divided across three. The new proposals in 2016 would see the borough split across five constituencies compared to the current two. Under the new proposals the average London borough is to be divided across three constituencies. Only three other boroughs in London would be represented by five or more constituencies and these are all larger than Merton – see **Appendix 1** for details.
- 2.10. The Boundary Commission has five criteria to follow when deciding on boundaries, with the criteria regarding minimum and maximum electorate size being binding. Our view is that the Boundary Commission's proposals for Merton have failed to meet four out of the five criteria. The criteria around 'special geographic considerations' would not apply. We also have concern that the review and potential redrawing of constituency boundaries every five years could be disruptive to partnership working and local communities.
- 2.11. For these reasons it is proposed that the Council responds to the Boundary Commission setting out its objections to the current proposals. A proposed response is set out at **Appendix 2**.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The borough can choose not to make a response to the consultation, or to agree with the proposals put forward by the Boundary Commission, however as outlined in this report and in the proposed response, we believe that the current proposals as they are will have a negative and disproportionate effect on the borough and its local communities.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Consultation on the initial proposals is open for a 12-week period, from 13 September to 5 December 2016. Revised proposals will be published in 2017, followed by a four week period of discussion before the Boundary Commission produce their final proposals to go to Parliament for approval by September 2018.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. See points 2.1 and 2.2

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purpose of this report

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1: Number of constituencies each London borough will cover
- Appendix 2: Merton Council's proposed response to the 2018 Boundary Review of Parliamentary constituencies consultation

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None for the purpose of this report.