

 <b>Licensing &amp; Regulatory Committee</b> <b>31 October 2016</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b> <b>4</b>
<b>Title</b>	2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Chris Elliott, Chief Executive 01926 456000 chris.elliott@warwickdc.gov.uk	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	Boundary Commission for England; Guide to the 2018 Review of Parliamentary constituencies; and Initial Proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries for West Midlands	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	No
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No
The review would impact on all residents equally and would be undertaken by an external party.	

<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive	07.10.16	Chris Elliott
Head of Service		
CMT	07.10.16	Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	07.10.16	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	07.10.16	Andrew Jones
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)	10.10.16	Councillor Andrew Mobbs
<b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>		
<b>Final Decision?</b>	Yes	

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The report brings forward a proposed response to the Initial Proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the West Midlands.

## 2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Council submits the following response to the Initial Proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries in the West Midlands:

- A That the proposals for Parliamentary Constituency boundaries as well as achieving electoral equality now, should also be based upon the principle of using boundaries which reflect the integrity of recognisable geographic and economically linked communities. However, the proposed boundaries do not reflect a recognisable geographic or economic community as they split the physically adjoining towns of Warwick and Royal Leamington Spa; and also split the town of Warwick, because the Kenilworth & Leamington Constituency, as proposed, includes the Myton & Heathcote Ward of the District, but which falls within the boundaries of the town of Warwick.
- B That the proposals for the Parliamentary Constituencies covering Warwick District Council generate other concerns, namely that:
- They will not achieve sustainable electoral equality, in that the electoral number upon which the constituencies are devised do not properly reflect development growth and improved electoral registration making it impossible that electoral equality can be sustained for at least the period to the General Election in 2025 without requiring a further significant boundary review. The Boundary Commission should be mindful of the significant uplift in registered electors across the country as a result of the EU referendum which has seen the Warwick District Parliamentary Electorate rise to 103,195, from the 97,930 in December last year. If replicated at the same or greater scale across the Country, it could radically alter the ratio of electors to an MP and not achieve the desired aim of electoral equality.
  - They need to use coterminous electoral boundaries i.e. County Divisions, District Wards and Parish/Town Council or Parish/Town ward boundaries as the building blocks for the shape of Parliamentary Constituencies in order to avoid voter confusion. The proposed boundaries do not always reflect other electoral boundaries in the area and in particular they should reflect this Council's proposals to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to amend and make coterminous the electoral boundaries between County, District and Town/Parish Council owing to the high level of projected growth and the difficulties caused at Town Council level resulting from the last review of the County Council Divisions.
- C The Constituency boundaries, of whatever geographical configuration is eventually concluded upon, should have as its building blocks for electoral boundaries, this Council's proposals as set out in another report on this agenda.

- D In the event that the Boundary Commission continues to use the current WDC Ward Boundaries as the basis for determining the Parliamentary Constituency boundaries:
- the proposals should be amended so that the current Myton & Heathcote District Ward is included within the Warwick & Stratford Constituency because this area is part of the town of Warwick and not Royal Leamington Spa;
  - the proposals should be amended to accord with the related alterations to the District Council Ward boundaries applied for (as set out in the associated report on this agenda) which, if its proposed Boundary Review is not completed, are most likely to be approved from 2019;

### 3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Licensing & Regulatory Committee is responsible for "All the powers and duties of the Council relating to Parliamentary Elections and Boundary Reviews". This includes responding to the Parliamentary Boundary Review Consultation.
- 3.2 The Council should consider the proposals and how these impact on the local communities that it represents. However, without significant analysis of the electoral numbers across the region, it would not be appropriate for this Council to bring forward significantly different alternative proposals. Officers are not in a position to undertake that wider significant analysis and therefore this report confines itself to impacts on the local community and this Council.
- 3.3 The Boundary Commission sets out the criteria for the points that will be considered as part of a submission. It discourages submissions based on potential boundary changes and instead seeks to use the District Ward boundaries that were in place in May 2015. As such, the proposed submission from this Council may not fall within this criterion. Even so, it is clear that there some issues of principle about the proposals; their impact on the local community and because of the significant changes coming forward due to the reasons stated in the report elsewhere on this agenda relating to the Review of Warwick District Council Boundaries.
- 3.4 The origin of the review of Parliamentary Constituencies stems from the desire by Government to reduce the number of MPs and to achieve greater electoral equality. That is, that roughly each constituency has the same number of voters in ratio to an MP. Currently that is not the case. Whilst electoral equality is a major concern, there are also other important aspects. These being:
- a. That a constituency should reflect the integrity of recognisable geographic and economically linked communities. A constituency devised simply to make numbers balance out is a poor basis for Parliamentary democracy.
  - b. That the electoral number upon which the constituencies are devised properly reflects development growth and improved electoral registration so that electoral equality can be sustained for at least the period to the General Election in 2025 without requiring a further significant boundary review. There is little point in not looking far enough ahead whilst undertaking a review as it will result inevitably in electoral inequality and the need for another costly review in short order.
  - c. That the same electoral boundaries are used to construct a constituency as those of County Divisions, District Wards and Parish Council or Parish ward boundaries to avoid voter confusion.

3.5 However, the proposals relating to the constituencies proposed to cover the area of Warwick District generate issues on all 3 points above, as follows:

- a. The proposals split two towns (Warwick and Royal Leamington Spa) that have been within the same Parliamentary Constituency since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. More importantly, the towns physically adjoin each other and have considerable economic, environmental and community links. The proposals also split the town of Warwick by placing one of its District Wards (Myton and Heathcote) within the Kenilworth and Leamington Constituency.
- b. The proposals do not allow for the growth in the electorate that this Council has forecast even over the period to 2020 let alone beyond it. The proposals use 97,930 as a base and at the Referendum the parliamentary electorate in the District was 103,195. This is the estimated level predicted by the LGBCE for 2018 (estimated register of 106,305 less circa 3,000 EU voters) and by 2020 the parliamentary electorate is estimated by the LGBCE to rise to circa 105,000. However, Warwick District Council estimates that electorate growth (based on proposed development) would see its Parliamentary electorate rise to between 106,000 and 109,000 by 2020. Whilst there are variables within these calculations that may or may not occur the current disparity is significantly large.

As members can deduce from another report on this agenda, the District is growing and with it so is the electorate (along with improved registration). There are 2 consequences arising from this disparity. One is that electoral equality will not in fact be achieved and the other is that it won't be maintained for very long if it currently has been achieved. This will lead to another review with all the cost that involves and the uncertainty created about representation, neither of which should be overlooked at this time.

There is a much wider national point at stake. As a result of voter engagement as part of the EU referendum there has been a significant increase in registered electors within Warwick District. This may also have been reflected in other areas across the region or country which may impact on the calculations of having an electorate per MP in the region of 75,000. This if replicated at the same or greater scale across the country has the potential to create more enduring and significant electoral inequality.

- c. This Council has continually sought coterminous electoral boundaries and is proposing a series of changes to District Wards and Town Council wards to avoid what officers foresee as a significant problem of voter confusion. Unless the Boundary Commission takes these proposals up then the Parliamentary elections of 2020 will be fought on one set of boundaries which will not be exactly the same as those fought the year (2019) before in the District and Town/Parish Council elections. This ought not to be a significant obstacle for the Boundary Commission as even if it does not change the proposals substantively, it could make this change without prejudicing the balance of electoral numbers.

3.6 This latter point is relevant to whatever geography is agreed for the Parliamentary Constituencies. The basic building blocks should be the electoral boundaries of parishes, District and County Division boundaries. If this principle is applied, then the potential for voter confusion will be minimised or avoided altogether.

- 3.7 It is worth highlighting to members that should the Boundary Commission address the Council's concerns about the towns of Warwick and Leamington being in different Parliamentary Constituencies then this would have a consequence elsewhere namely that Kenilworth and the immediately surrounding parishes would be likely to then be part of a different constituency. The alternative geographical options are limited but could include with being part of a constituency with the southern part of Coventry which given the mutual links with the University may be some merit; with Balsall Common and Meriden etc as was previously proposed; with Rugby as was the case in the past or with the Southam area as is currently the case. Members may wish to take a view on this in making their decision.
- 3.8 However, should the Boundary Commission decide to continue using the current WDC ward boundaries then two points should be made:
1. that the Myton and Heathcote ward should be part of the Warwick and Stratford constituency and not Kenilworth and Leamington as the ward is firmly part of the town of Warwick.
  2. That the other related changes which are the subject of two other reports on this agenda must also be taken account on in the Boundary Commission's eventual proposals.
4. **Policy Framework**
- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – The report does not impact on the Council's Policy Framework.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** –The proposal does not impact on any of the 3 strands of Fit for the Future.
- 4.3 **Impact Assessments** – No impact assessments have been undertaken on the proposals within this report as the Boundary Commission would be obliged to complete these as part of their review.
5. **Budgetary Framework**
- 5.1 The report does not impact on the current Budgetary Framework for the Council.
6. **Risks**
- 6.1 The proposals present a few but low level risks to the Council itself, most of which are administrative concerns on the impact of managing the electoral register, specifically if amendments to boundaries, outlined elsewhere on the agenda are not brought forward. The greater issues are for the community as outlined in this report.
- 6.2 The proposals if implemented as is, would impact specifically on the Myton & Heathcote Ward of Warwick by it being placed in the Kenilworth & Leamington constituency. In addition, if the current District Council boundaries are used these would not reflect the current Town Boundary for Warwick which are defined by the Parish/Town boundaries, which were amended prior to the 2015 elections by a Community Governance Order of this Council.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 The Council could make a number of alternative options proposals for the Constituency Boundaries. However, these would need to look at the whole picture of the region taking into consideration the ration of MP to electors of between 71,031 and 78,507.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Map of the BCE proposed Constituencies