

## PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

### Executive Summary

At the beginning of June 2021, the Boundary Commission for England published proposals for a review of the Parliamentary Boundaries across the Country as part of its initial consultation arrangements. This report outlines the implications of the Commission's proposals for Surrey as a whole as well as the Borough of Woking and proposes a response to the consultation.

The Boundary Commission has produced a set of plans which would result in the Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries change across the Country. Whilst the total number of Constituencies across the UK would remain unchanged at 650, the proposals would see changes to the distribution of those constituencies. Overall, the proposals result in the number of parliamentary constituencies that cross council boundaries increasing by approximately a third, potentially creating more complexity for councils running elections and causing confusion amongst residents.

In terms of Woking, however, the proposals would result in the Parliamentary Constituency boundary changing to fully reflect the Borough's boundary. The two Guildford wards of Pirbright and Normandy, which currently come under the Woking Constituency, would in future fall under the Parliamentary Constituency for Surrey Heath.

It is considered that the proposal for Woking is to be welcomed, resulting in a Constituency that matches the Borough's boundary. The proposal has the additional benefit of simplifying Woking's Parliamentary election processes, removing the necessity to share data with Guildford Borough Council in order to manage the elections in Pirbright and Normandy. The Council is invited to agree that a response is submitted to the Commission's consultation, welcoming the proposed boundary change for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking.

### Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

**RESOLVE That** a formal response is sent to the Boundary Commission of England welcoming its proposed boundary change for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking on the grounds that the new Constituency would become coterminous with the local authority boundary, be within the statutory electorate range and give Woking Borough a stronger voice.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

**Background Papers:** None.

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## **Parliamentary Boundary Review 2023**

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## 1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for England has the task of periodically reviewing all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of rules most recently updated by Parliament in 2020. These latest rules retain 650 constituencies for the UK Parliament as a whole, and require constituencies that are proposed by the Commission to comply with strict parameters, in particular as far as the number of electors in each constituency is concerned.
- 1.2 The Boundary Commission for England is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body, which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 1.3 The review process is heavily informed by public consultation. The Boundary Commission for England develops and publishes initial proposals for constituencies across England. Representations from the public about these proposals are then taken in writing and at public hearings in each region of England across two rounds of consultation. In light of all the views expressed about these initial proposals, the Commission may revise them and then conduct a further round of written consultation on the revised proposals.
- 1.4 The Commission is required to make a formal final report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before 1 July 2023, recommending any changes that it believes are appropriate to the distribution, size, shape, name or designation of constituencies in England. The current constituencies review is therefore referred to as ‘the 2023 Review’.
- 1.5 The Government must turn the recommendations of the Commission (and those of the equivalent Commissions for the other three parts of the UK) into an ‘Order in Council’ that implements the recommendations. The constituencies set out in the Order will then be implemented for the next General Election after the date on which the legislation is approved.
- 1.6 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**
- 1.7 The Commission has applied the same distribution formula to the English allocation, which results in the following redistribution of constituencies among the nine English regions for the 2023 Review:
  - **East Midlands = 47** (increase of one)
  - **Eastern = 61** (increase of three)
  - **London = 75** (increase of two)
  - **North East = 27** (decrease of two)
  - **North West = 73** (decrease of two)
  - **South East = 91** (increase of seven)

- **South West = 58** (increase of three)
  - **West Midlands = 57** (decrease of two)
  - **Yorkshire and the Humber = 54** (no change)
- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 These figures are based on the UK electoral quota for the 2023 review which is, to the nearest whole number, 73,393. Rule 2 of The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020) provides that (apart from five specified exceptions) every Constituency recommended by the Commission must have an electorate that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota.
- 1.10 Other factors the Commission has to take into consideration include:
- Special geographical considerations, including size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
  - Local Government boundaries;
  - Boundaries of existing Parliamentary Constituencies;
  - Any local ties that would be broken by changes in Constituencies; and
  - The inconveniences attendant on such changes.
- 1.11 It should be noted that the Boundary Commission is also required to specify a name and designation for each proposed constituency. In general, the name proposed will reflect the main population centre(s) contained in the constituency, recognising that those are likely to be the main focal points for communities in the area.
- 1.12 On 8 June 2021, the Commission published its initial proposals for how the 543 constituencies for England could be drawn up within the legal parameters mentioned above. This commences a statutory consultation period of eight weeks (closing on 2 August 2021), when anyone can give their views on those proposals. The Commission has indicated that it is particularly interested to hear from people about the extent to which the proposals reflect the local ties in the area, and if people disagree with the proposals, how they think they should be amended.
- 1.13 There will be two further rounds of public consultation.

## 2.0 The Timetable

- 2.1 The Commission’s initial outline timetable is planned as follows:

- 5 Jan 2021: Headline electorate figures published by ONS, and the Commission started to develop of initial proposals;
- 24 March 2021: Complete ward-level electorate figures (i.e. including ‘prospective’ wards) published;
- 10 May 2021: ‘Guide to the 2023 Review’ published;

- 8 June 2021: Initial proposals published and eight-week written consultation started;
- 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.

### **3.0 How people can get involved**

- 3.1 The Commission wants to ensure the final recommendations reflect the views and knowledge of local residents and communities. By visiting the Commission’s online consultation portal ([www.bccreviews.org.uk](http://www.bccreviews.org.uk)), residents can:
- View the map of proposed constituencies
  - Provide feedback on the new boundary lines
  - Share their views on proposed new constituency names
  - Email [information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk](mailto:information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk) or call 020 7276 1102 for general enquiries
  - Email [press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk](mailto:press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk) or call 07821 637558 for press enquiries
  - Write to the Commission at: Boundary Commission for England, 35 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BQ

- 3.2 Any constituents who are unable to get online can view the initial proposals for new constituency boundaries at local places of deposit, and submit responses to the Commission by letter or email. The local place of deposit for the residents of Woking is Woking Library along Gloucester Walk.

### **4.0 Proposals for the County of Surrey**

- 4.1 The proposals for Surrey, as outlined by the Boundary Commission, are set out below. The details of the proposals in respect of the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking are explained in paragraph 3:

1. *There are currently 11 constituencies in Surrey. Of the existing constituencies, five have electorates within the permitted range; however, only three of these could remain wholly unchanged, due to changes to local government ward boundaries. All of the remaining six constituencies are above the 5% limit.*
2. *As mentioned above, we propose a Windsor constituency that crosses the boundary with Berkshire, around the town of Egham, as well as a constituency that crosses the boundary with Hampshire, in the south-west of Surrey. We propose that this constituency, which includes a number of towns along the county council border, be called Farnham and Bordon, to reflect the two main population centres. We consider that the transport links between Haslemere and Liphook, along the rail line and A3 (Portsmouth Road), as well as north/south road links between Farnham and Bordon, along the A325 and A287, indicate a community of interest despite the county council boundary.*

3. Of the three constituencies which can be retained wholly unchanged, we propose no alterations only to the Spelthorne constituency, which is coterminous with the Borough of Spelthorne. We propose that two wards (Normandy and Pirbright) from the existing Woking constituency be transferred to Surrey Heath, such that the Woking constituency would become coterminous with the Woking local authority. With electorates having increased to the east of the existing Mole Valley constituency, we propose that it would include the three wards for the town of Horley, as well as the South Park & Woodhatch ward, from the Borough of Reigate and Banstead. We therefore propose that the constituency be called Dorking and Horley to reflect both major population centres as well as the constituency including parts of two local authorities.
4. We propose minimal changes to the two constituencies shared between the Runnymede and Elmbridge boroughs. As the water-meadow of Runnymede lies within the Egham wards, which (as previously mentioned) we propose to include in the Windsor constituency, the name 'Runnymede and Weybridge' is clearly no longer appropriate; therefore, we propose a Weybridge and Chertsey constituency with broadly similar boundaries. We propose that the Cobham & Downside ward be transferred from the existing Esher and Walton constituency to our proposed Weybridge and Chertsey constituency. We propose no further changes to either constituency other than minor changes to the boundary between these constituencies to align with changes to local government boundaries.
5. We consider that the Reigate constituency would not be able to remain unchanged despite falling within the permitted electorate range, due to the need to align with changes to local government boundaries and the adjacent East Surrey constituency. This latter constituency is largely contained within Tandridge district, which is mathematically entitled to 0.89 constituencies, so needs to include wards from elsewhere, but is penned in by boundaries with two other counties in the South East region, as well as with London. We therefore propose that the East Surrey constituency include the Hooley, Merstham & Netherne ward from the Reigate and Banstead local authority. We subsequently propose a Reigate constituency comprising the northern part of the Reigate and Banstead local authority, including two wards (Nork, and Tattenham Corner & Preston) that were previously included in the Epsom and Ewell constituency.
6. We propose that the Epsom and Ewell constituency, which previously included wards from three different local authorities, would consist of the entirety of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell with only one authority crossing, into Mole Valley district, to include the towns of Leatherhead and Ashtead.
7. In order to bring the Surrey Heath constituency to within the permitted range, we propose that it include, in addition to the entirety of Surrey Heath district, the wards of Normandy and Pirbright, but that the three wards consisting of the villages of Ash and Ash Vale are transferred to the Godalming and Ash constituency.
8. We propose that the Guildford constituency be reconfigured, such that it is entirely within the Borough of Guildford, including a number of rural wards to the northeast of the town. The village of Cranleigh, which was previously in the Guildford constituency, would be included with its closer neighbour Godalming from the same Borough of Waverley, along with Ash in a Godalming and Ash constituency which crosses the local authority boundary between the Borough of Guildford and the Borough of Waverley. These two settlements are the two major population centres in an otherwise largely rural constituency.
9. Our proposals in the Berkshire, Hampshire, and Surrey sub-region mean that 13 constituencies (one third of the total allocation of constituencies in the sub-region)

*are either unchanged, changed only to realign constituency boundaries with changes to local government ward boundaries, or are changed by the transfer of just one ward.”*

#### 4.2 Proposed Surrey Constituencies

Constituency	Type	Electorate
Dorking and Horley	County Constituency	73,001
East Surrey	County Constituency	73,145
Epsom and Ewell	Borough Constituency	76,844
Esher and Walton	Borough Constituency	73,922
Farnham and Bordon	County Constituency	71,726
Godalming and Ash	County Constituency	69,981
Guildford	County Constituency	71,367
Reigate	County Constituency	69,805
Spelthorne	Borough Constituency	72,897
Surrey Heath	County Constituency	70,825
Weybridge and Chertsey	County Constituency	74,908
Windsor	County Constituency	72,566
Woking	Borough Constituency	71,737

#### 5.0 Implications for Woking

- 5.1 The Boundary Commission had drawn up an initial proposal for Woking which would see the current Constituency Boundary changed to reflect in its entirety the Borough Boundary. To achieve this, the Wards of Normandy and Pirbright would be ‘transferred’ to the Parliamentary Constituency for Surrey Heath. The Commission does not recommend any change to the name of the Woking Constituency as part of its recommendations.
- 5.2 The Constituency of Woking will continue to be designated as a ‘Borough Constituency’, as opposed to a ‘County Constituency’. Borough constituencies are predominantly urban while county constituencies are predominantly rural. The designation generally determines who shall act as Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections. The Returning Officer in Borough Constituencies is a Council Chairman or Mayor (for County Constituencies it is the High Sheriff). It should be noted that the role of Returning Officer is a ceremonial one and that the substantive duties are carried out by the Acting Returning Officer.
- 5.3 The designation also determines the limit on the amount that a candidate is allowed to spend during a Parliamentary election, with the limit slightly lower in Borough Constituencies.
- 5.4 A copy of the proposed boundary for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking is attached as an appendix to this report.

5.5 The change is considered to be a positive one for the residents of Woking, noting the confusion that has often arisen amongst electors in the past as a result of the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking including two Wards that lie in the Borough of Guildford.

5.6 There are also significant benefits for Woking Borough Council in terms of the management of future Parliamentary elections; the Council has always faced the challenge of data sharing with Guildford Borough Council to ensure the residents of Normandy and Pirbright were issued their ballot papers and postal votes by Woking Borough Council.

## **6.0 Woking Borough Council's Response**

### Initial Consultation 8 June to 3 August 2021

6.1 Those who respond to the consultation are asked to say whether they approve of, or object to, the Commission's proposals. In particular, those responding are asked to indicate what they propose in place of the Commission's recommendations.

6.2 A report on the proposal for Woking was presented to the Elections and Electoral Registration Review Panel at its meeting on 21 June 2021. The report highlighted the benefits of the proposed Parliament Constituency boundary change for Woking and invited the representatives at the meeting to submit any comments they had. The Members of the Panel welcomed the proposals.

6.3 The Members of the Council are now asked to consider the implications of the proposals and agree that a response is submitted to the Commission's consultation, welcoming the proposed boundary change for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking. The response will be sent to the Commission by the consultation's closing date of 3 August 2021.

6.4 It should be noted that the Council's Marketing and Communications Team has promoted the Boundary Commission's consultation through the Council's website to help to raise awareness. The Team also arranged for an article to be included in the Woking News and Mail newspaper.

### Secondary Consultation Period

6.5 Following the eight week consultation on the initial proposals, the Commission will publish all representations made and stage a further six week consultation period during which comments can be submitted on those representations received during the initial consultation. This consultation includes the opportunity for representations to be made at public hearings.

### Final Proposals

6.6 The Commission will consider all representations received and will publish a report for each of the regions, indicating whether or not any changes have been made. If changes have been made, a further period of four weeks will be given for written representations.

6.7 The Commission will finally submit a formal report to the Speaker of the House of Commons, to be laid before Parliament. Within four months of the last report being laid, the Government is required to submit to the Privy Council an Order that gives effect to all four Commissions' recommendations. Once approved by the Privy Council, the new constituencies will take effect at the next General Election.

## **7.0 Corporate Strategy**

7.1 The work of the Election's Team falls within the Corporate Strategy's priority of 'Engaging with our Communities'. The changes within the Boundary Commission's proposals will not have a direct impact on the residents of Woking but will result in the boundary of the Parliamentary Constituency matching that of the Borough. The Woking Constituency would no longer include

the two wards of Normandy and Pirbright from the neighbouring Borough of Guildford and would solely represent the residents of Woking.

## **8.0 Implications**

### Finance and Risk

- 8.1 There are no direct financial or risk implications arising from this report.

### Equalities and Human Resources

- 8.2 There are no direct equalities or human resources implications arising from this report.

### Legal

- 7.3 The legislative basis of Parliamentary Constituency Boundary reviews is found in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011 and the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020. The Act imposes requirements upon the way in which the review will operate. This review follows the legislative requirements. The approval of the submission to the Boundary Commission of England is a matter reserved to Full Council.

## **9.0 Engagement and Consultation**

- 9.1 The consultation is being managed by the Boundary Commission for England. A 'partner guide' has been prepared by the Commission which sets out ways in which partner organisations can assist in promoting public engagement. The guide has been shared with the Council's Marketing and Communications Team which has promoted the consultation through the Council's website and prepared an article for the Woking News and Mail newspaper. A link to the consultation was also included in the Council's e-newsletter issued early in July.
- 9.2 In regard to the Council's response to the consultation, a report was presented to the Elections and Electoral Registration Review Panel in June 2021, setting out the proposed course of action through Council and inviting any comments.

REPORT ENDS