

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**FULL COUNCIL – 22 JULY 2021**

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW**

**REPORT OF ANTHEA LOWE – ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: POLICY & GOVERNANCE**

**LEAD MEMBER – CLLR CONCEPTA CASSAR – CHAIR OF BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update following the meeting of the Boundary Review Committee on 8 July 2021 at which consideration was given to the proposals released by the Boundary Commission for England in respect of the parliamentary boundaries for the area of Telford and Wrekin.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that Full Council:-**

- a. Considers the comments made by the Boundary Review Committee in respect of a proposed response to the Boundary Commission for England regarding the proposals arising out of the Parliamentary Boundary Review; and**
- b. Delegates authority to the Associate Director: Policy & Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Boundary Review Committee, to finalise the wording of the draft response.**

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</b>	Submission to Boundary Commission for England due by no later than 2 August 2021.	

<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	No	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	There is a raft of legislation pertaining to parliamentary boundary reviews, the latest to be enacted being the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020. The current review, referred to as the 2023 Review, is being conducted in accordance with that legislation. The most recent changes in legislation mean that there is no requirement for a draft Order to be debated by Parliament. Therefore, it is more likely than not that the final proposals will be enacted into law. AL 13/07/2021
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	The parliamentary review, if implemented, would result in changes to the parliamentary boundaries for both the Telford and the Wrekin constituencies. It also proposes a change to the name of the The Wrekin constituency.
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	No	None.

#### **4. INFORMATION**

- 4.1 After many years of discussion regarding the matter, a parliamentary boundary review is now underway and is expected to be finalised in 2023. This is referred to as the 2023 review.
- 4.2 In June 2021, the Boundary Commission for England published its proposals for the parliamentary boundaries throughout England. Those proposals include making changes to the boundaries for both Telford and The Wrekin parliamentary constituencies. It is important to note that these changes have no bearing on the Council or Council business. However, the changes may impact upon some residents who may find that their parliamentary constituency has changed.
- 4.3 As with all boundary reviews, there are a number of principles that the Boundary Commission for England **must** comply with and then some other principles that the Boundary Commission **may** have regard to. These are set out in more detail below:-
- Each parliamentary constituency must contain between 69,724 and 77,062 electors (as at 2 March 2020);

- There will be a decrease of 2 constituencies within the West Midlands taking the total number of constituencies to 57;
- The Boundary Commission for England will try, as far as possible, to have regard to local ties, geographic factors, existing constituencies, local government boundaries as they were known at 1 December 2020 and minimising disruption caused by proposed changes;
- The Commission uses local government wards as the building blocks for proposed constituencies but will consider splitting a ward where there is a strong case for doing so that helps the Commission better respect the factors set out above.

4.4 Changes have been proposed to both Telford and The Wrekin constituencies. Attached at **Appendix A** is the current map for the Telford constituency and, at **Appendix B**, the proposed map for that constituency. **Appendix C** sets out the current map for the Wrekin constituency and **Appendix D** sets out the proposed map for a new proposed constituency named Newport and Wellington. The proposed changes are summarised below:-

#### Telford Constituency

- 4.5 It is proposed that the boundary is altered slightly. This change means that, rather than following the A442, Queensway at Trench Pool, the boundary continues along the railway line towards Hadley before heading south to join the existing boundary at Ketley. This means that part of Hadley Road, Marlborough Road and Castle Street will be included in the Telford constituency. This results in some of the electors who are currently in The Wrekin constituency being moved into the Telford constituency.
- 4.6 The current electorate within Telford is 69,331 which falls slightly short of the number required by the Boundary Commission. The proposed changes take the total electorate to 70,768.

#### The Wrekin constituency

- 4.7 There are some more substantial changes proposed to The Wrekin constituency.
- 4.8 As well as the changes mentioned in relation to Telford which affect The Wrekin constituency, there are further changes proposed to the north of the constituency.
- 4.9 Those changes see a largely rural area that currently sits within North Shropshire moving into The Wrekin. The northernmost boundary is proposed to sit just south of Market Drayton, heading west north of Buntingsdale Estate and Weston before following a line south past Moston and Stanton upon Hine Heath before joining the existing boundary just north-west of Ellerdine.

- 4.10 The current electorate for The Wrekin stands at 71,077. The proposed electorate, if the changes are implemented, stands at 76,143.
- 4.11 The final significant change is that it is proposed the constituency is renamed Newport and Wellington with no reference being made to The Wrekin.

#### Electoral administration

- 4.12 Currently, during parliamentary elections, Telford and Wrekin's Returning Officer "takes on" around 9 polling stations from Shropshire's Returning Officer. This is due to the fact that the parliamentary boundaries and local authority boundaries do not align. The proposed changes to The Wrekin constituency mean that there will be additional polling stations to take on from Shropshire as the parliamentary boundary has been further extended.
- 4.13 This does impact upon the way in which elections are administered in that Telford and Wrekin acts as the Returning Officer for those parts of the constituency that fall into the parliamentary constituency but the Electoral Registration Officer function rests with Shropshire Council. Therefore, the Returning Officer does not have electoral registration data readily available to assist with queries. Whilst processes are in place to minimise the impacts of this, it seems that an opportunity has been missed to improve this, particularly given that the Boundary Commission aims to use both local government boundaries and ward boundaries as building blocks for the parliamentary boundaries. It is clear, when looking at the current electorate, changes could be made between the Telford and the Wrekin constituencies which would mean that they could each meet the electorate ratio required without needing to take on electors from outside the local authority boundary. However, it should be noted that effective electoral administration is not one of the criteria that the commission takes into account.

#### Timetable and process

- 4.14 The expected timetable and process is set out below. The current stage of the process is highlighted green.

Dec 2020 – March 2021	Boundary Commission for England working with counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to establish the data to be used for the review including the number of constituencies across each part of the UK.
March 2021 – May 2021	Preparing initial proposals
June 2021 – 2 August 2021	Consultation on initial proposals. An 8 week period of consultation.

Early 2022	Second period of consultation (6 weeks) and public hearings.
Late 2022	Final consultation (4 weeks) on “revised proposals”.
By 1 July 2023	Final report and recommendations.
Late 2023	Recommendations made into law with new proposals being used for next general election (but no by-elections in the interim period).

### Meeting of the Boundary Review Committee

4.15 The Council’s Boundary Review Committee’s Terms of Reference set out that it should make recommendations to full Council on matters pertaining to parliamentary boundary reviews. The Boundary Review Committee met on 8 July 2021 to consider the proposed alterations to the parliamentary boundaries. Members of the Committee were asked to consider whether or not a response should be provided to the Boundary Commission for England during this period of consultation. Specifically, Members were asked to consider the following:-

- The proposed change to the boundary between the Telford and The Wrekin constituencies;
- The proposed change to the boundary between The Wrekin and North Shropshire constituencies;
- The proposed change of name to The Wrekin constituency so that it becomes known as Newport and Wellington.
- Any missed opportunities; and
- Any alternative proposals

4.16 After considering the proposals, the Boundary Review Committee considered, on a majority basis, that a response **should** be submitted to the Boundary Commission for England making the following points:-

- That the Council supports the Boundary Commission’s initial proposals for the constituencies of North Shropshire, Shrewsbury, and Ludlow & Bridgnorth constituencies (with a recommended name change for the latter);
- That the Council supports most of the recommendations for Newport & Wellington (with a recommended name change) and Telford constituencies but propose changes in the Priorslee and Hadley & Leegomery areas to better reflect local ties (more on this below);
- The Council agrees that Newport and Wellington should gain Cheswardine and Hodnet from North Shropshire and these are considered to be the two most appropriate areas to be moved;
- It is agreed that the whole of Oakengates & Ketley Bank ward should be included in the Telford constituency;

- Support is not given to the inclusion of Hadley & Leegomery in the proposed Newport & Wellington constituency. Hadley & Leegomery should be in Telford.
- The Council takes the view that Priorslee should not be included within the Telford constituency but that it should fall within the proposed Newport and Wellington constituency; and
- The Council strongly believes that the title of the Newport and Wellington constituency does not properly reflect local identity and that the constituency should retain the name of the Wrekin.

## **5. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 5.1 More details on the parliamentary boundary review are available on the Boundary Commission for England's website at [BCE Consultation Portal \(bcereviews.org.uk\)](https://www.bce.org.uk/consultation-portal) which has a search by postcode function as well as a search by region function available.

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