

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	23rd November 2011
3.	Title:	Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review 2013 – Initial Proposals
4.	Directorate:	Resources - Commissioning, Policy & Performance

5. Summary

The Boundary Commission for England is reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries under new rules in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. The number of constituencies in England needs to reduce from 533 to 502 whilst ensuring that each constituency contains between 72,810 and 80,473 electors. The Commission's initial proposals are currently being consulted on and the deadline for responses is 5 December 2011.

The proposals for Rotherham are for two constituencies within the Borough and one which crosses the boundary with Sheffield. These boundaries seem reasonable given the limitations of the rules which must be followed. However, there are local concerns about the name "Rawmarsh" for the northern constituency and the alternative of Rotherham North is suggested.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- a) **Note this report and the draft proposals for Rotherham and South Yorkshire.**
- b) **Agree to support the proposed constituency boundaries.**
- c) **Agree to propose the alternative name of Rotherham North for the proposed Rawmarsh constituency.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Introduction

The Boundary Commission for England is reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries under the new rules set out in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. The Commission has begun with an initial proposal for consultation on new boundaries and must make its final recommendations to the Government by October 2013.

The new rules agreed by Parliament include reducing the total number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502 and ensuring that each constituency contains a similar number of electors. The rules stipulate that every constituency in England (except for the Isle of Wight) must have an electorate that is no more than 5 per cent either side of the UK electoral quota of 76,641. This means that each constituency must contain between 72,810 and 80,473 electors. The Commission's initial proposals are currently subject to consultation and the deadline for responses is 5 December 2011.

7.2 Proposed New Constituencies in Rotherham

In line with the national reduction, the proposals for South Yorkshire will reduce the number of constituencies from 14 to 13. Only Doncaster Borough has the right number of electors to form complete constituencies within its own boundaries. Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield will all have to share constituencies with at least one neighbouring local authority. The proposed constituencies for Rotherham are as follows:

- **Rother Valley** constituency, with 73,068 electors is unchanged since it has an electorate which falls within 5% of the electoral quota. The following 8 wards are included:
 - Anston and Woodsetts
 - Dinnington
 - Wales
 - Maltby
 - Hellaby
 - Holderness
 - Rother Vale
 - Sitwell

- A new “**Rawmarsh**” constituency is proposed with 73,288 electors, largely based on the existing Wentworth & Dearne constituency. The new constituency would include the Valley & Wingfield wards from the existing Rotherham constituency but exclude the Dearne North & Dearne South wards from Barnsley. The proposed Rawmarsh would include the following 8 wards:
 - Hooper
 - Wath
 - Swinton
 - Rawmarsh
 - Silverwood
 - Wingfield
 - Valley
 - Wickersley

- A proposed new **Rotherham and Sheffield East** constituency with 73,631 electors made up of the remaining 5 Rotherham MBC wards plus the Darnall and Shiregreen & Brightside wards (2 wards in all) from Sheffield. The following 7 wards would be included:
 - Rotherham East
 - Rotherham West
 - Keppel
 - Boston Castle
 - Brinsworth and Catcliffe
 - Darnall (Sheffield)
 - Shiregreen and Brightside (Sheffield)

7.3 Assessment of the Proposals for Rotherham

Given the requirement that the electoral quota be the prime consideration for determining boundaries, the proposed constituencies in Rotherham seem reasonable and each contains only whole wards which will help to avoid confusion when Parliamentary elections are combined with local elections as happened in May 2010 and is expected in May 2015.

Unlike Doncaster, there are not enough electors in Rotherham for the Borough to have three constituencies within its boundaries. Rotherham has 191,489 electors which divided by three would create constituencies about 9,000 electors too small. Indeed, this was the case at the last review which resulted in the current Wentworth and Dearne, which includes two wards from Barnsley (16,982 electors). The rising average size of constituencies means a greater degree of sharing is now needed and the proposed Sheffield element within Rotherham and Sheffield East would be 28,498 electors.

The new constituency of Rotherham and Sheffield East would draw the majority (61%) of its electors from Rotherham Borough. Rotherham and Sheffield East would be based around the Lower Don Valley between Sheffield and Rotherham, which shares a common industrial heritage of steel making and related trades. Shared industrial and commercial interests, along with travel to work patterns reflect this heritage, giving some cohesion to the new constituency. There is already a constituency named Don Valley (in Doncaster) so the name of the new constituency needs to avoid confusion with this. The areas of Sheffield which would be included are Shiregreen, Wincobank, Concord Park, Brightside, Tinsley, Meadowhall, Darnall, Greenland, Carbrook, Newhall, Attercliffe and part of Handsworth.

The names of the constituencies seem reasonable apart from the proposed Rawmarsh constituency which is largely made up of the areas long associated with the historical constituency name of Wentworth which existed from 1918-1950 and 1983 to date. There is no tradition of a constituency called Rawmarsh and this could result in confusion with the ward of the same name. There are many communities in the proposed constituency as well as Rawmarsh and Wentworth. The Council is asked to suggest the alternative name of Rotherham North which would avoid undue emphasis on any one community and help to consolidate a shared identity as part of Rotherham. Any such proposal must be made by the deadline of 5 December 2011.

7.4 South Yorkshire Proposals

Doncaster Borough is unaffected by the proposals since its existing three constituencies contain the correct number of electors. The Commission's proposals for Sheffield and Barnsley have prompted local concerns and attempts to draw up alternative boundaries. These alternatives do not suggest or depend on any amendments for Rotherham or Doncaster but attempt to resolve potential issues for Sheffield and Barnsley by reducing the cross border constituencies from two to one as at present (Penistone and Stocksbridge). Subject to approval by elected members, Sheffield and Barnsley councils may wish to submit alternative proposals. Sheffield City Council has no objection to the proposed Rotherham and Sheffield East constituency.

8. Finance

There are no financial implications for Rotherham MBC. The costs of future Parliamentary elections will be the same whether the existing boundaries are used or the new boundaries.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

These are the initial proposals by the Boundary Commission for England and are subject to public consultation. The initial proposals may be amended following the responses they receive.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There are no significant implications for policy and performance. New Parliamentary boundaries will not be used to define other boundaries. Rotherham MBC will continue to be represented by three MPs. Instead of one MP having an additional interest in the Barnsley Dearne, the Lower Don Valley in Sheffield would be represented by a "Rotherham" MP.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Boundary Commission launched a 12 week consultation on its initial proposals on 13th September 2011. The proposals are available to the public via the Commission's website and at a number of locations such as libraries throughout the country.

There have been internal consultations within the Council (Corporate Policy, Legal Services and Electoral Services) and between the local authorities in South Yorkshire. There has also been consultation with RMBC Members through the Deputy Leader.

Background Paper: Initial proposals for Yorkshire and The Humber, Boundary Commission for England, September 2011

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