



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

**Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio
Holder for Finance**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Council proposals of the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.

Executive summary

- 2 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body, which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 3 The BCE is required to make recommendations for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries by 1 July 2023.
- 4 The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 sets out the rules to be followed in conducting the review. The aim is to retain the overall number of constituencies across the UK at 650. The rules set out a distribution formula, which results in an increase in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 543. The rules also require that every recommended constituency (with the exception of five constituencies) must have an electorate that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.
- 5 The BCE published its initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries on 8 June 2021. Views on the initial proposals can be submitted up to 2 August 2021.

- 6 This report summarises the proposals in respect of the North East and in particular, County Durham.

Recommendation(s)

- 7 Council is recommended to agree that:
- (a) Constitution Working Group seek to agree any principles of common ground which can be submitted by way of a letter to the Boundary Commission by 2 August 2021;
 - (b) If such a letter is agreed, it will be circulated to all Members of the Council.

Background

- 8 The BCE must conduct a review of all the constituencies in England every eight years. The current review, which commenced in January 2021, is being conducted in accordance with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 (the Act). This requires the BCE to make more equal the number of electors in each constituency.
- 9 There will be 650 Parliamentary constituencies covering the UK. England has been allocated 543 constituencies, which is ten more than there are currently. The rules require that every constituency recommended by the BCE has no fewer than 69,724 electors and no more than 77,062.
- 10 Currently, constituencies across England range from 54,551 to 111,716 electors. In order to achieve the required distribution of electors and an additional ten constituencies, the BCR is recommending significant changes to the existing constituency arrangements.
- 11 As well as the rule in relation to the minimum and maximum number of electors, the Act also provides that the BCR may take into account:
 - Special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - Local government boundaries which existed, or were prospective on 1 December 2020;
 - Boundaries of existing constituencies;
 - Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies; and
 - The inconveniences attendant on such changes.
- 12 The initial proposals for the North East are therefore based on local government boundaries that existed on 1 December 2020. In a number of existing constituencies, changes to local government wards since those constituencies were last updated in 2010, have resulted in the new ward effectively being split, between the constituency the old ward was wholly a part of, and at least one other existing constituency.
- 13 As part of the proposals, the BCR will by default seek to realign the boundaries of constituencies with up to date ward boundaries in order to reunite wards that are currently divided between existing constituencies. Where there has only been minor change to a ward, this approach may see an existing constituency boundary change only very slightly to realign with the new ward. Where wards in an area have been changed

more significantly, this may result in the area covered by the new ward becoming part of a different constituency.

- 14 The BCR have tried to retain existing constituencies wherever possible whilst meeting the other requirements. However, this has proved difficult. The initial proposals for the North East region retain just under 7% of existing constituencies in the region. The remainder are new constituencies although the BCR consider that in a number of cases the changes to the existing constituencies are fairly minor.

Timetable for Review

- 15 There are five stages to the review, which are summarised below. The review is currently at Stage 2:

Stage One	Development of initial proposals Review commenced in January 2021. Electorate data published from 2 March 2021 for each local government ward in England. Data was provided by local authorities and the Office for National Statistics. Data used to inform review process and must be used throughout. Initial proposals published for consultation on 8 June 2021.
Stage Two	Consultation on initial proposals 8 June – 2 August 2021 – eight-week consultation period
Stage Three	Consultation on representations received Six-week secondary consultation period expected early 2022. Opportunity to review and comment on responses to initial proposals. Between two and five public hearings in each region where views can be expressed directly to an Assistant Commissioner. Details to be confirmed.
Stage Four	Development and publication of revised proposals Analysis of representations received from stages one and two, consideration as to whether evidence presented persuades BCR to revise initial proposals. Any changes must be published for a further four week consultation. Expected to be towards the end of 2022. No further public hearings.
Stage Five	Development and publication of the final report and recommendations BCR will determine final recommendations and report to the Speaker of the House of Commons by 1 July 2021. Report will be laid in Parliament and published. Government required to submit an Order to the Privy Council, which gives effect to the recommendations. No modifications to the recommendations unless requested by the Commission. Privy Council approves Order, new constituencies take effect at the next general elections. By-elections held in the meantime based on existing constituencies. Validity of an Order in Council may not be called into question in any legal proceedings.

Proposals for the North East Region

- 16 The North East region comprises the unitary authorities of County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, South Tyneside, Stockton-on-Tees and Sunderland.
- 17 There are currently 29 constituencies in the region. Of these, six are within the permitted electorate range, 21 currently fall below the minimum number of electors and two are above the maximum number. There are 1,952,999 electors in region, which gives a mathematical entitlement of 26.61 constituencies.
- 18 The BCR are proposing to reduce the number of constituencies from 29 to 27. In seeking to produce 27 constituencies within the electorate range, the BCR have considered whether local authorities could be grouped into sub-regions. In doing so, they have tried to respect county boundaries wherever possible and achieve obvious practical groupings such as those dictated by the geography of the area such as the Rivers Tees, Tyne and Wear and the Pennines.
- 19 The BCR have sought to retain constituencies within combined authority and unitary authority boundaries, However, where this has not been possible, they have sought to group authorities together into sub-regions. It is possible to allocated a whole number of constituencies within each of the combined authority area without crossing from one combined authority to another.
- 20 The BCR have therefore recommended sub-regions which mirror the North East, North of Tyne and Tees Valley combined authorities with the exception of Gateshead, which is considered separately. The BCR considers this to be a practical approach. However, it invites respondents to the consultation to submit counter-proposals based on other groupings of counties and unitary authorities, which meet the statutory requirements of the review.
- 21 The BCR have discounted combining County Durham and Northumberland because combining them into a sub-region would create a constituency which crosses a local authority boundary and one that crosses the boundaries of the North East and North of Tyne combined authorities.
- 22 Grouping Northumberland, Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside provides a mathematical entitlement to 8.13 constituencies and means that constituencies can be created within a single sub-region.
- 23 Gateshead has an electorate of 144,619 and is entitled to 1.97 constituencies. The BCR is therefore proposing two constituencies,

without crossing out the unitary authority area and wholly contained within the local authority boundary.

- 24 County Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland have an electorate of 716,893 and an entitlement of 9.77 constituencies. The BCR propose 10 constituencies without crossing out of the North East Combined Authority and preserves Sunderland Central, which is within the required electorate range.
- 25 The Tees Valley Combined Authority has an electorate of 494,601 and a mathematical entitlement to 6.74 constituencies. The BCR considered that the Combined Authority area can be allocated seven constituencies without crossing the combined authority boundary. However, due to the distribution of electorates in certain parts of the sub-region, the majority of constituencies will have to be reconfigured to bring them within the permitted electorate range. Hartlepool has an electorate of 71,228 which provides an entitlement of 0.97. The BCR therefore propose a Hartlepool constituency within the local authority boundary.

Initial Proposals for the County Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland sub-region.

- 26 Based upon the electorate of the County Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland sub-region as set out at paragraph 24, the BCR are proposing an allocation of ten constituencies rather than the current eleven.
- 27 The current City of Durham, North West Durham and Sunderland Central have electorates within the permitted electorate range. The BCR state that the electorates of the remaining constituencies are significantly below the permitted electoral range. This includes Easington at 61,335 and South Shields at 62,796.
- 28 There are no proposed changes to the Sunderland Central Constituency. The BCR propose to treat Gateshead as its own sub-region including the Blaydon and Gateshead Constituencies. This will mean that Jarrow (electorate 65,232) will take in the wards of Castle, Redhill and St Anne's from Sunderland West and Cleadon and East Boldon to the South Shields Constituency. It is proposed that Jarrow will be renamed Jarrow and Sunderland West to better reflect the new composition of the constituency.
- 29 It is proposed that the existing Washington and Sunderland West constituency gains the wards of Sandhill, Shiney Row, Silksworth and St Chad's with the name being changed to Washington and Sunderland South West to better reflect the geography.

- 30 The BCR propose to move the electoral division of Burnopfield and Dipton from North West Durham to North Durham, to bring it within the permitted electorate range at 73,327 electors. The remainder of North West Durham will remain relatively unchanged, other than to realign its boundaries with changes to local government ward boundaries, which creates a constituency with an electorate of 70,300.
- 31 It is proposed that the City of Durham Constituency is extended into the Borough of Sunderland as far as Houghton-le-Spring, which has good connections to Durham via the A690 road.
- 32 The existing Easington constituency has an electorate of 61,335. The BCR considered that its position on the coast between Sunderland to the North and a coterminous Hartlepool constituency to the south limits the options available. They propose to extend the constituency slightly westwards and include Doxford Ward from the Borough of Sunderland. It is also proposed to change the constituency name from Easington to Seaham and Peterlee to better reflect the main population centres.
- 33 The BCR propose that the constituencies of Bishop Auckland and Sedgefield include wards from City of Durham to bring them into the permitted electorate range. The proposed Bishop Auckland constituency will include the Brandon ward and the Sedgefield Constituency will include the Coxhoe ward. The Sedgefield constituency will be renamed to Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield to better represent the main population centres of the Constituency.
- 34 Under the proposals outlined above, the new constituencies for County Durham would be as set out at paragraphs (i) to (vi) below. A map showing the initial proposals for the region is set out at Appendix 2 to the report. Appendix 3 to the report sets out the existing constituency wards, the electorate and the proposed constituency. :

i) **Bishop Auckland CC** **72,307**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Barnard Castle East	County Durham	6,979
Barnard Castle West	County Durham	6,656
Bishop Auckland Town	County Durham	6,057
Brandon	County Durham	7,635
Coundon	County Durham	3,177

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Evenwood	County Durham	6,458
Spennymoor	County Durham	8,848
Tudhoe	County Durham	7,044
West Auckland	County Durham	6,545
Willington & Hunwick	County Durham	6,861
Woodhouse Close	County Durham	6,047

ii) **City of Durham CC** **70,603**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Belmont	County Durham	10,129
Durham South	County Durham	2,204
Elvet & Gilesgate	County Durham	5,740
Framwellgate & Newton Hall	County Durham	10,315
Neville's Cross	County Durham	7,409
Sherburn	County Durham	6,722
Copt Hill	Sunderland	9,027
Hetton	Sunderland	9,171
Houghton	Sunderland	9,886

iii) **Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield CC** **70,149**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Aycliffe East	County Durham	6,420
Aycliffe North & Middridge	County Durham	8,406

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Aycliffe West	County Durham	5,358
Bishop Middleham & Cornforth	County Durham	2,884
Chilton	County Durham	3,429
Coxhoe	County Durham	9,779
Ferryhill	County Durham	8,125
Sedgefield	County Durham	6,370
Shildon & Dene Valley	County Durham	9,630
Trimdon & Thornley	County Durham	9,748

iv) **North Durham CC** **73,327**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Annfield Plain	County Durham	5,891
Burnopfield & Dipton	County Durham	6,333
Chester-le-Street East	County Durham	3,006
Chester-le-Street North	County Durham	3,071
Chester-le-Street South	County Durham	5,991
Chester-le-Street West Central	County Durham	5,811
Craghead & South Moor	County Durham	5,737
Lumley	County Durham	5,727
North Lodge	County Durham	3,020
Pelton	County Durham	10,227

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Sacriston	County Durham	5,638
Stanley	County Durham	6,361
Tanfield	County Durham	6,514

v) **North West Durham CC** **70,300**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Benfieldside	County Durham	6,488
Consett North	County Durham	5,874
Consett South	County Durham	3,598
Crook	County Durham	9,277
Deerness	County Durham	9,479
Delves Lane	County Durham	6,232
Esh & Witton Gilbert	County Durham	6,384
Lanchester	County Durham	6,085
Leadgate & Medomsley	County Durham	6,830
Tow Law	County Durham	3,435
Weardale	County Durham	6,618

vi) **Seaham and Peterlee** **72,787**

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Blackhills	County Durham	6,245
Dawdon	County Durham	6,098
Deneside	County Durham	5,435

Constituency Ward	Local Authority	Electorate
Easington	County Durham	5,710
Horden	County Durham	5,393
Murton	County Durham	5,817
Passfield	County Durham	3,426
Peterlee East	County Durham	5,415
Peterlee West	County Durham	6,131
Seaham	County Durham	5,365
Shotton & South Hetton	County Durham	6,802
Wingate	County Durham	3,094
Doxford	Sunderland	7,856

Responding to the Initial Proposals

- 35 The consultation on the BCRs initial proposals is open for a period of eight weeks, closing on 2 August 2021. The proposals can be viewed at www.bcereviews.org.uk where you can view the proposed constituencies and how they compare with existing constituencies and local government boundaries. Representations on the proposals can be submitted through the consultation website.
- 36 When making representations, it is important to bear in mind the requirements of the Parliamentary Constituency Act 2020. The BCE highlight in respect of the North East Region:
- They cannot recommend constituencies that have electorates that contain more than 77,062 or fewer than 69,724 electors;
 - The initial proposals are based on local government ward boundaries (existing or – where relevant – prospective) as at 1 December 2020 as the building blocks of constituencies. Although where there is strong justification for doing so, the BCE will consider dividing a ward between constituencies;
 - The BCE have constructed constituencies within regions, so as not to cross regional boundaries. Very compelling reasons would need

to be given to persuade the BCE that they should depart from this approach.

- 37 When making representations, it is important to bear in mind any consequential effects for neighbouring areas, which might result from alternative suggestions. The BCE is required to look at the recommendations for new constituencies across the whole region (and England).
- 38 The Commission are interested to know whether their proposals are supported. If proposals are not supported, they invite respondents to use the tools on their website to put forward counter-proposals, which meet the criteria outlined in this report.
- 39 The Constitution Working Group met on 30 June 2021 to consider the proposals. It was noted that this consultation period is shorter than the initial consultation periods on previous Boundary Commission reviews, which were 12 weeks.
- 40 There has been limited opportunity since the proposals were published to consider whether a response on behalf of the County Council could be agreed. It is therefore proposed that the Constitution Working Group seeks to agree points of principle to be included in a letter to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 2 August 2021.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the North East Region. [North East | BCE Consultation Portal \(bcereviews.org.uk\)](https://www.bcereviews.org.uk)

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 makes provision for the requires the Boundary Commission to conduct a review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries, and make recommendations to Government, every 8 years. Under the review, the overall number of Constituencies will remain unchanged at 650. The distribution formula provides for an increase of constituencies from 533 to 543 in England. With the exception of five constituencies, each must have an electorate that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.

Finance

There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

Consultation

The report summarises the proposals of the BCE in relation to Parliamentary constituencies to enable constitution working group to consider whether to make representations in relation to those proposals.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no equality and diversity implications arising out of the report.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications arising out of the report.

Human Rights

There are no Human Rights implications arising out of the report.

Crime and Disorder

There are no Crime and Disorder implications arising out of the report.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications arising out of the report.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications arising out of the report.

Risk

There are no risks to the Council arising out of the report.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications in relation to the report.