

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2011/2012 REPORT NO. 131

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Council
9 November 2011

REPORT OF:

Chief Executive on behalf of the
Electoral Review Panel

Contact officer and telephone number:

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Agenda – Part: 1

Item: 11

Subject:

Review of Parliamentary Constituency
Boundaries

Wards: All 21 Wards

Cabinet Member consulted:

Andrew Stafford

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Boundary Commission for England published its initial proposals for the review of parliamentary constituency boundaries on 13 September 2011.
- 1.2. The Electoral Review Panel considered the effect of the initial proposals on Enfield at its meeting on 11 October 2011 and agreed that Council be recommended to make representations to the Boundary Commission setting out the Borough's general objections to the initial proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That Council considers whether the representations set out at paragraph 3.6.1 should be submitted to the Boundary Commission for England

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 11 October 2011, the Electoral Review Panel was advised that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which was passed in February 2011, required the Boundary Commission for England to conduct a review of parliamentary boundaries in England and to make recommendations to Government by October 2013.
- 3.2 It was further noted that the Commission had published its initial proposals on 13 September 2011 which, if enacted, would have the effect of Enfield being served by 5 Members of Parliament, rather than the current 3, in the Enfield North, Enfield Southgate, Chingford and Edmonton, Hornsey and Wood Green and Tottenham constituencies.
- 3.3 The Panel debated at length the impact the proposals would have on the Borough and considered what representations Council might be invited to make to the Commission. Issues such as challenging the sectorisation of London into three distinct areas, the placement of Enfield in the North East London sub-region, the tenuous nature of the A406 North Circular Road being the link between Edmonton and Chingford to the east and the breaking of local ties were all considered.
- 3.4 The Panel unanimously agreed that the initial proposals were not in the best interests of Enfield but reluctantly accepted that the task of coming up with alternative proposals to present to the Commission would be an extremely difficult task taking into account the parameters set by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and the potential that any alternative schemes might then not be in the interests of all interested parties, and also having a knock-on effect to neighbouring boroughs.
- 3.5 The Panel resolved that officers liaise with all members of the Panel and those present at this meeting in agreeing a form of wording to be presented to Council at its meeting on 9 November 2011 recommending that representations be made to the Boundary Commission for England setting out the Borough's general objections to the initial proposals.
- 3.6 Following that consultation process, Council is asked to consider whether the following representations should be made to the Boundary Commission:
- 3.6.1 "The London Borough of Enfield notes the initial proposals made by the Boundary Commission for England for the review of parliamentary constituency boundaries, which were published on 13 September 2011.

The Council further notes that the Commission must conduct the review in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which requires that each constituency must contain between 72,810 and 80,473 parliamentary electors.

However, the Council and representatives of a number of local political parties agree that the initial proposals are not in the best interests of the

people of Enfield and its surrounding area, and should therefore be re-considered.

In making this statement, the Council does not consider it is able to offer specific alternative proposals because it does not have the specialist resources available to it to undertake such complex re-calculations, which the Commission does, and even if it did, the necessary political independence of the review might be compromised.

Notwithstanding these points, the Council urges the Boundary Commission to re-consider its initial proposals for the following reasons:

- We believe that Enfield should have been placed in the London North West sub-region, not in the London North East sub-region, particularly as the bulk of the Borough is to the west of the River Lee, which the Commission has considered as a geographical barrier in its considerations.
- We do not believe that sufficient consideration has been given to the geographical nature of the area. The proposed Chingford and Edmonton constituency crosses the King George V reservoir, which is a significant geographical barrier. The reason given in the report that “the North Circular road provided a suitable link between Edmonton ... and Chingford” is tenuous as access off that road between the two areas is extremely poor.
- No consideration has been given to the demographics of the area; the demography of Edmonton is completely different to that in Chingford (reinforced by the geographical barrier of the King George V reservoir), which therefore creates a completely artificial constituency.
- The argument is made in the report that “We decided ... that we would not cross the River Lee between Tower Hamlets and Newham [and] rejected crossing between either Hackney or Haringey and Waltham Forest”. No justification is given for this decision and we would contend that crossing the River Lee further south would create more socially cohesive constituencies than the artificial one proposed for Chingford and Edmonton.
- The Borough regrets that the historical tie of Edmonton to Enfield will be irreparably severed, creating significant administrative issues for the Borough Council. For example, the proposed Meridian Water development in the east of Enfield, which is a major priority for the Borough Council, will fall within two parliamentary constituencies (Chingford and Edmonton and Tottenham) neither of which will be seen to be a constituency primarily serving the constituents of Enfield.

The London Borough of Enfield therefore urges the Boundary Commission for England to re-consider its initial proposals in light of the statements made above in order to better reflect the needs of the local area and which will result in three Enfield-focussed constituencies.”

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council is not obliged to make representations to the Boundary Commission but the Commission has published its initial proposals for consultation by all interested parties.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To determine whether Council should be recommended to make representations to the BCE.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

a) Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications other than Officer time in the preparation of supporting information.

b) Legal Implications

The Boundary Commission must undertake its review of parliamentary constituency boundaries in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, including taking into account representations made by interested parties. Rule 5 in Schedule 2 requires the Boundary Commission to take into account when drawing up proposal for new constituencies “any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies”.

7. KEY RISKS

The re-designation of parliamentary constituency boundaries will have an effect on the relationship of MPs with the Council. At present, 3 MPs have a direct interest in the Borough; the Commission’s initial proposals will increase this representation to 5, 3 of whom will also have an interest in neighbouring local authority areas.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES

8.1 Fairness for All

To ensure fairness for all, appropriate democratic representation is required at all levels.

8.2 Growth and Sustainability

To generate growth and sustainability, appropriate democratic representation at all levels is required.

8.3 Strong Communities

The development and maintenance of strong communities is enhanced by effective democratic representation at all levels..

9. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The designation of effective and appropriate parliamentary constituency boundaries assists the local authority in continuing to deliver high quality services across the borough.

Background papers:

Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for the review of parliamentary constituency boundaries published on 13 September 2011

Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011

Report to and minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Review Panel, 11 October 2011