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## **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND - REVIEW OF UK PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES**

**Report by Chief Executive**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**2 November 2017**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report gives details of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's revised proposals from its Review of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland which impact on the constituents in the Council's Tweeddale East and West Wards.**
- 1.2 The 2018 Review of Westminster parliamentary constituencies is being conducted simultaneously by the four Boundary Commissions in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales, with the aim of reducing the number of constituencies from 650 to 600, with Scottish constituencies decreasing from 59 to 53. There is a number of criteria applied by the Commission in its proposals for Scottish Constituencies relating to geographic size, Council boundaries and minimum/maximum electorate numbers.
- 1.3 The proposed constituencies which cover the Scottish Borders Council area are Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk County Constituency, and Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale County Constituency. This latter Constituency covers the Midlothian Council area, along with SBC Ward 1 (Tweeddale West), and part of SBC Ward 2 (Tweeddale East), where the boundary partly follows the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council area and an historic ward boundary. In effect, this means that Innerleithen and Walkerburn move away from the rest of Tweeddale into the Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk County Constituency. However, if the electorate within Traquair (c. 200), Innerleithen (c. 2,500) and Walkerburn (c.590) were to be placed in Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale, this would increase the total electorate for that constituency to 80,114, which is beyond the maximum allowed electorate of 78,507.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 I recommend that the Council notes the proposals for Boundary Commission for Scotland's Review of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland and the changes affecting the constituents in the Tweeddale East and West Wards.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The 2018 Review of UK Parliamentary constituencies is a requirement of the Constituencies Act 1986. It is being conducted simultaneously by the four Boundary Commissions in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Across the UK, the number of constituencies is being reduced from 650 to 600, with Scottish constituencies decreasing from 59 to 53.
- 3.2 The electoral quota for the Review, which is the average electorate per constituency across the UK, is 74,762, with the electorate of each constituency having to be within 5% of that. That means the smallest permitted electorate for a constituency is 71,031, and the largest 78,507. The electorate for this Review is taken from the Electoral Register published on 1 December 2015. Subject to these conditions, the Commission may take into account, as they see fit, other factors, namely:
- special geographical considerations, including the size, shape, and accessibility of a constituency;
  - boundaries of council areas and electoral wards;
  - existing Westminster constituency boundaries; and
  - any local ties which would be broken by changes in constituencies.

### **4 PROPOSED CONSTITUENCY CHANGES**

- 4.1 The proposed constituencies which cover the Scottish Borders Council area are Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk County Constituency, and Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale County Constituency.
- 4.2 The proposed Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk County Constituency covers 3,999 sq km, with an electorate of 73,812. The proposed Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale County Constituency covers 1,099 sq km, with an electorate of 76,824. This latter Constituency covers the Midlothian Council area, along with SBC Ward 1 (Tweeddale West), and part of SBC Ward 2 (Tweeddale East), where the boundary partly follows the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council area and an historic ward boundary.
- 4.3 At the moment, the electorate in SBC Ward 1 and part of Ward 2 (without the Clovenfords Polling District) currently sit within the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale County Constituency. SBC Ward 1 in its entirety will move to the new Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale County Constituency. SBC Ward 2 (Tweeddale East) has a total electorate of 8,159, and of that, 4,073 would be placed in Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale, and 4,086 would be placed in Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk. This latter number includes the Clovenfords Polling District (electorate c. 880) which is already in the existing Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk Constituency.
- 4.4 In effect, Innerleithen and Walkerburn move away from the rest of Tweeddale into Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk County Constituency. However, if the electorate within Traquair (c. 200), Innerleithen (c. 2,500) and Walkerburn (c.590) were to be placed in Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale, with the rest of Tweeddale, this would increase the total electorate for that constituency to 80,114, which is beyond the maximum allowed electorate of 78,507. Cardrona (electorate c.770) has been placed in Midlothian and Upper Tweeddale and could move into Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, without impacting on the maximum electorate allowed in either constituency, but Cardrona is within the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council area. Moving Cardrona into the Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk constituency would thus mean a split in that Community Council area.

## **5 TIMETABLE AND PROCEDURES**

- 5.1 The Secretary of the Boundary Commission wrote to the Chief Executive on 16 October 2017 advising that revised proposals for the 2018 Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies would be published on 17 October 2017 for an eight week final consultation period. All comments on these revised proposals need to be sent to the Commission by 11 December 2017, which is the end of the statutory consultation period, after which the Commission will finalise its recommendations and submit these to the Secretary of State for Scotland in September 2018.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

### **6.2 Risk and Mitigations**

The only potential risk to the Council not responding to the consultation is that constituents within SBC Wards 1 and 2 may wish the Council to take a viewpoint. However, based on the criteria for the new constituencies, officers have been unable to provide a different proposal to that being suggested. Political parties, individual Councillors, community groups and members of the public can all submit their own comments directly to the Commission.

### **6.3 Equalities**

No equality impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out as nothing in the recommendations in the report is considered to discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or religion and belief.

### **6.4 Acting Sustainably**

There are no economic, social or environmental effects contained in the recommendations of this report.

### **6.5 Carbon Management**

There is no impact on the Council's carbon emissions contained in the recommendation in this report.

### **6.6 Rural Proofing**

There is no impact on rural areas contained in the recommendations in this report.

### **6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the recommendations in this report.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 *The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, and the Clerk to the Council. Any comments received will be incorporated in the final report.*

**Approved by**

**Chief Executive**

**Signature .....**

**Author(s)**

Name	Designation and Contact Number
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**Background Papers:** Letter from Secretary to Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland dated 14 October 2017

**Previous Minute Reference:** Nil

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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