

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: City Council – 12 October 2011
Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 3 October 2011

Subject: Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

Report of: The Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report:

To enable the Council to consider the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for parliamentary constituencies in the North-West and, more particularly, Manchester and Greater Manchester.

Recommendations:

The Council is requested:

1. To determine whether it agrees or disagrees, in whole or part, with the BCE's initial proposals for parliamentary constituencies in Manchester.
 2. To the extent that it disagrees, if at all, to put forward alternative proposals which meet the statutory criteria and whose knock-on effect can be demonstrated not to prejudice the achievement of the statutory criteria in neighbouring areas across the region.
 3. To authorise the Chief Executive to respond to the BCE by 5 December 2011.
-

Financial Consequences for the Revenue Budget:

None

Financial Consequences for the Capital Budget:

None

Wards Affected:

All

Implications for:

Equal Opportunities
No

Risk Management
No

Legal Considerations
See report

Contact Officers

Name: Sir Howard Bernstein
Position: Chief Executive
Telephone: 0161-234 3006
E-mail: h.bernstein@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Rodney Lund
Position: Assistant City Solicitor
Telephone: 0161-234 4019
E-mail: r.lund@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Kate Brown
Position: Head of Electoral Services Unit
Telephone: 0161-234 3147
E-mail: k.brown@manchester.gov.uk

Background Documents:

Boundary Commission for England – Initial Proposals – North West
Boundary Commission for England – A guide to the 2013 Review
Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011

1. Background

1.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is conducting its sixth general review of parliamentary constituencies (“the 2013 Review”) in England following the enactment of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act (“the 2011 Act”) which amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (“the Act”) and changed the rules for the redistribution of constituencies.

1.2 The principal changes introduced by the 2011 Act are as follows:

1.2.1 Number of UK Constituencies

The Act now provides that the number of constituencies in the United Kingdom shall be 600. This is a reduction of 50 from the current number of 650, although previously, there had been no fixed limit – the Act merely provided that the number of constituencies in Great Britain (i.e. excluding Northern Ireland) should not be substantially greater or less than 613 (of which not less than 35 had to be in Wales) and that the number of constituencies in Northern Ireland should be between 16 and 18.

1.2.2 Allocation of seats to parts to the UK

The Act provides that the number of constituencies in each of the four nations of the UK should be allocated to each nation in proportion to their registered electorate in December 2010 using what is known as the Sainte-Lague method. It also provides for 4 protected constituencies, namely, Orkney and Shetland (currently protected), Na h-Eileanan an Iar (better known as the Western Isles) and 2 constituencies in the Isle of Wight. The effect of the above resulted in an allocation as follows:

Nation	Electorate	Current		New
		Allocation	Allocation	
England	38,332,557*	533	500(+2)	31
North Ireland	1,190,635	18	16	2
Scotland	3,873,387**	59	50(+2)	7
Wales	2,281,596	40	30	10
* excludes the electorate of the Isle of Wight (110,924)				
** excludes the electorate of Orkney and Shetland (33,755) and the Western Isles (21,837)				

1.2.3 Electorate per constituency

Except for the protected constituencies, the electorate of any constituency must be –

- (a) no less than 95% of the UK electoral quota, and
- (b) no more than 105% of that quota.

The UK quota works out at **76,641** and therefore constituencies must have an electorate of no less than **72,810** and no more than **80,473**, this is known as the statutory electorate range.

1.2.4 Consultation and Public Hearings

The rules in relation to consultation (including public hearings) have been changed and the new procedure is described in paragraph 4 of this report.

1.2.5 Frequency of Reviews

Previously, the Boundary Commission were required to report between 8 and 12 years after their previous report. Under the new system they will have to report no later than 1 October 2013 and every 5 years thereafter.

- 1.3 The Act provides that the BCE may take into account the boundaries of the English regions used for the purposes of elections to the European Parliament. Therefore, the BCE has determined, following consultation, to use these boundaries in its initial proposals, and furthermore that seats would be allocated to regions in proportion to their registered electorate using the same method as used to allocate seats to the 4 nations of the UK. This produces the following allocations:

Region	Electorate	Current Allocation	New Allocation	Change
Eastern	4,280,707	58	56	-2
East Midlands	3,361,089	46	44	-2
London	5,266,904	73	68	-5
North East	1,971,249	29	26	-3
North West	5,253,019	75	68	-7
South East	6,192,504	83	81	-2
South West	4,042,475	55	53	-2
West Midlands	4,115,668	59	54	-5
Yorkshire & Humber	3,848,942	54	50	-4
Total	38,332,557	532	500	-32
Isle of Wight	110,924	1	2	+1
Total	38,443,481	533	502	-31

- 1.4 In determining constituency boundaries, the BCE must ensure that all constituencies (other than the protected constituencies) should have a registered electorate (using December 2010 figures) within the statutory electorate range. Subject to this, the BCE may take into account, if and to such extent as they think fit -

- ❖ Special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- ❖ Local government boundaries (i.e. counties, districts and wards) as they existed in May 2010;
- ❖ The boundaries of existing constituencies;
- ❖ Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

2 BCE Initial Proposals for the North West

- 2.1 On 13 September the BCE published its initial proposals for the whole of England including 68 for the North West. The BCE had earlier indicated that, as in previous reviews, they would use electoral wards as building blocks and that, in the absence of exceptional and compelling circumstances, they would not split wards in cases where it is possible to construct constituencies that meet the 5% statutory requirement without doing so. In the event, none of the proposed constituencies contain split wards. The BCE's initial proposals report for the North West is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 In its proposals for the North West the BCE decided to group the Borough of Wirral together with Cheshire rather than the rest of Merseyside so as to avoid a constituency crossing the Mersey at its estuary.
- 2.3 In broad terms, allocation to sub-regions in the North West are as follows:

Sub-region	Existing Allocation	Theoretical Entitlement	Proposed Allocation
Cheshire and Wirral	15	13.33	13
Merseyside (less Wirral)	11	10.06	10
Greater Manchester	27	25.55	26
Lancashire	16	14.51	14
Cumbria	6	5.09	5
Total	75		68

However, it should be noted that, two of the proposed constituencies cross sub-region boundaries. Poynton Ward (11,805 electors) from Cheshire East is included in a Hazel Grove and Poynton constituency, and seven Rossendale wards (25,912 electors) are included in a new Rochdale North and Rawtenstall constituency.

3. Initial proposals for Manchester and Greater Manchester

- 3.1 Maps illustrating the proposed 26 Greater Manchester seats are attached at Appendix 2, and a breakdown of the proposed seats by reference to local authorities and existing constituencies is attached at Appendix 3. As will be seen, only two Greater Manchester seats remain unchanged – Bury South and Wigan.
- 3.2 Manchester is currently grouped with Salford and Trafford and the three local authority areas currently have nine seats between them. Three of these are wholly in Manchester (Manchester Central, Gorton and Withington) and two

are cross-boundary seats, the largest parts of which are in Manchester (Blackley & Broughton and Wythenshawe & Sale East)

- 3.3 Under the BCE initial proposals, six of the proposed new seats contain Manchester wards. Two constituencies (Manchester Gorton and Manchester Withington) are wholly within Manchester. Manchester wards make up the largest part of three cross-boundary constituencies (Manchester Central, Blackley and Broughton, and Wythenshawe). One Manchester ward – Charlestown – is incorporated in a new cross-boundary Middleton constituency which also contains wards from Rochdale and Oldham. Nine Manchester wards would change constituency. These wards contain 94,871 electors, 27.5% of all Manchester electors.
- 3.4 In more detail -
- ❖ BLACKLEY AND BROUGHTON gains Moston and Miles Platting & Newton Heath from Manchester Central and loses Charlestown to Middleton. (The Salford wards of Broughton and Kersal remain in the seat)
 - ❖ MANCHESTER CENTRAL loses Moston and Miles Platting & Newton Heath to Blackley and Broughton and Ardwick and Moss Side to Manchester Gorton, but gains 4 Salford wards from Salford and Eccles – Irwell Riverside, Langworthy, Ordsall, and Weaste & Seedley
 - ❖ MANCHESTER GORTON gains Ardwick and Moss Side from Manchester Central and loses Fallowfield and Whalley Range to Manchester Withington
 - ❖ MANCHESTER WITHINGTON gains Fallowfield and Whalley Range from Manchester Gorton, and loses Didsbury East and Didsbury West to Wythenshawe
 - ❖ WYTHENSHAW gains Didsbury East and Didsbury West, and loses the Trafford Wards of Brooklands and Priory to Altrincham and Sale (Sale Moor remains in the Wythenshawe seat)
 - ❖ MIDDLETON contains 6 Rochdale wards currently in Heywood and Middleton, and 2 Oldham wards currently in Oldham West and Royton, as well as Charlestown ward.
- 3.5 Although the return of Moston to the Blackley restores local ties, some of the other proposals have caused considerable controversy, in particular -
- ❖ The proposed Manchester Central seat which combines 4 wards from Manchester and 4 wards from Salford breaking local ties on both sides (e.g. Moss Side is split from Hulme) and which in Salford's case leaves it split between 4 different seats of which only one is wholly within its boundaries and none of which carries the Salford name.

- ❖ The inclusion of the Charlestown ward in a new Middleton seat which contains wards from 3 different authorities breaking Charlestown's local ties with other North Manchester wards.
- ❖ The inclusion of the 2 Didsbury Wards in the Wythenshawe seat crossing the Mersey Valley and breaking local ties in South Manchester – a proposal which has been rejected in the last two boundary reviews following local inquiries.

3.6 In relation to Greater Manchester as a whole, the changes involve several local ties being broken, in particular –

- ❖ **Leigh** is split between the Leigh and Westhoughton seats
- ❖ **Ashton-under-Lyne** is split between the Ashton and Denton seats
- ❖ **Horwich** is split between Bolton North and Westhoughton
- ❖ **Chadderton** is split between Middleton and Ashton-under-Lyne
- ❖ **Royton** is split between Rochdale South and Oldham & Saddleworth
- ❖ **Heywood** is split between Middleton and Rochdale South
- ❖ **Bredbury** is split between Denton and Hazel Grove & Poynton
- ❖ **Sale** which is currently split between 2 seats is now split between 3 seats (Altrincham & Sale, Wythenshawe and Stretford & Urmston)

3.7 It should be appreciated that the BCE has a difficult task as a result of the overall reduction in the number of constituencies, the imposition of a very tight statutory electorate range and the fact in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire wards have large electorates. This means that it is inevitable that some local ties will have to be broken. On the other hand, some of the difficulties in Greater Manchester and elsewhere would seem to be self-inflicted. Numbers require that some Lancashire electors are transferred to a Greater Manchester seat. However, the BCE has chosen to transfer them into Rochdale, disrupting two constituencies which already met the statutory criteria and thereby causing knock-on disruption elsewhere (including Charlestown), whereas it might have been more logical to transfer Lancashire electors into an area which has undersized seats (for instance, Bolton and/or Bury) and where there would have been less knock-on disruption.

4. Consultation Process

4.1 The consultation process has changed significantly from previous reviews, and the old public inquiry system has been replaced by a new procedure that relies on a combination of written representations and oral representations at public hearings.

Initial Consultation Period

- 4.2 The initial consultation period on the initial proposals runs for 12 weeks from 13 September to 5th December. Representations can be made either in writing by 5 December or orally at a series of public hearings.
- 4.3 Five two-day public hearings will be held in the North West commencing in Manchester at the Britannia Hotel on 11th and 12th October. There will be subsequent hearings over the following two weeks in Chester, Carlisle, Liverpool and Preston. Each hearing will be chaired by an Assistant Commissioner. The purpose of the hearings is to provide an opportunity both for the BCE to explain its initial proposals and for people to give their views on those proposals.
- 4.4 The BCE has stressed that it attaches just as much significance to representations made in writing as to those made orally at public hearings. Those who give their views – whether orally or in writing are requested to say whether they approve of, or object to, the BCE's proposals. The BCE guidance states that an objection accompanied by a viable counter-proposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of the objection, and a counter-proposal setting out the composition of each constituency in an area will generally be viewed as more persuasive than a proposal for the composition of one constituency which does not address any knock-on effect on the electorate figures of other constituencies. The guidance, however, states that the public hearings are intended to focus on the BCE's initial proposals rather than on comments on any counter-proposals as this can be done during the secondary consultation period.

Secondary Consultation Period

- 4.5 As soon as possible after the initial 12-week consultation has closed, the BCE will publish on its website all representations received, including transcripts of the public hearings. As the initial consultation period does not close until 5 December, it is not clear whether this information will be published before Christmas. Once published, there will be a further 4-week consultation period during which people can submit written comments on the representations received during the initial consultation period, for example challenging or supporting assertions made in a representation.

Development of and Consultation on Revised Proposals

- 4.6 Assistant Commissioners will consider all representations made in the initial and secondary consultation periods and prepare a report for the BCE recommending whether – and, if so, how – the initial proposals should be revised. The BCE will then consider the report and determine whether revisions should be made. The BCE then publishes a notice stating whether or not revisions have been made, together with all representations received during the secondary consultation period.

- 4.7 If the proposals are revised, there will be a further 8-week consultation period for written representations on the revised proposals.

Final Recommendations and Report

- 4.8 The BCE will consider any representations on the revised proposals made in the 8-week consultation period, and makes its final decisions about whether further modifications need to be made in light of those representations.
- 4.9 When the BCE has decided on its final representations for the whole of England, it will submit a formal written report to the Government and this must be done before 1 October 2013. The report must then be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

5. The Council's Response

- 5.1 The Council is asked to consider its response to the BCE's initial proposals. The views of the Council as a local authority will clearly carry most weight insofar as they relate to Manchester and are supported by cogent reasons which are not party political. Therefore, it is suggested that Members initially consider whether they agree with the proposals for the constituencies containing Manchester wards. If they do, there will probably be no need to consider other areas in great depth. However, if Members disagree in whole or in part with the proposals for Manchester, they will need to consider not only their proposed alternatives for Manchester which comply with the statutory electorate range and other relevant factors, but also how the knock-on effect of such counter-proposals on other areas can be accommodated with the requirement for constituencies in those other areas to meet the statutory criteria. The knock-on effect on any counter-proposal may affect constituencies in the rest of Greater Manchester and also Cheshire (and the Wirral) and Lancashire.
- 5.2 If the Council were minded to oppose the BCE's initial proposals for Manchester and put forward an alternative which involves more respect for existing constituencies and local ties, it should be noted that of the 9 existing seats in the Manchester/Salford/Trafford grouping, 5 seats are already within the statutory electorate range:

- Manchester Gorton (74,681)
- Manchester Withington (73,656)
- Wythenshawe & Sale East (75,602)
- Salford & Eccles (76,863)
- Worsley & Eccles South (73,409)

One seat has an electorate above the statutory range, i.e. Manchester Central (89,519) and three seats have undersized electorates - Blackley & Broughton (69,006), Altrincham & Sale West (72,008), and Stretford & Urmston (70,520)

5.3 The transfer of Moston Ward (10,903 electors) from Manchester Central to Blackley & Broughton would bring those two seats also within the statutory range (78,616 and 79,909 respectively) . However, if the Council wished to avoid any additional changes to the Manchester and Salford seats, the undersize of the two wholly Trafford seats would have to be addressed. This would probably have to be done by the transfer into a Trafford seat of at least one ward from either Cheshire East or Warrington.

6. **Recommendations**

6.1 The recommendations appear at the front of this report.