

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL – 3 NOVEMBER 2011**

**REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF GOVERNANCE**

**PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1.0 SUMMARY OF REPORT**

1.1 This report considers the initial proposals that have been published for consultation by the Boundary Commission for England for future parliamentary constituencies for the Borough.

1.2 The proposals are that there should be a Telford North and The Wrekin constituency and a Bridgnorth and Telford South constituency.

1.3 This report explains the statutory criteria that the Commission has used in drawing up its proposals. The report considers the Commission's initial proposals against the statutory criteria and invites Members' comments.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The report asks Members to consider the response, if any that the Council should give to the consultation either at the public hearings in Ludlow on the 7-8 November 2011 or in writing before the close of consultation on 5 December 2011 or both.

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	No	
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	<i>Borough Wide</i>
<b>DELIVERY DATE</b>	<i>Deadline for submissions in this Review – 7 November/ 5 December 2011</i>	
<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	No	
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	No	
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	No	<i>At this stage, this is a consultation.</i>
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC</b>	Yes	<i>Borough-wide impact.</i>

## **PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3.0 REPORT DETAIL**

3.1 The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 reduces the number of MPs for England from 533 to 502 and lays down statutory criteria for the division of England into parliamentary constituencies. The Boundary Commission for England is responsible for drawing up the new constituencies, and the Commission has published its initial proposals. With regard to the Borough, the proposals are that there should be two constituencies, and **maps of the proposed constituencies are attached** to this report at Appendices 1 and 2:

- Telford North and The Wrekin
- Bridgnorth and Telford South.

(Eight wards of the County of Shropshire are included in the proposed Bridgnorth and Telford South constituency.)

3.2 These proposals are open to consultation, and anyone may comment on them to the Commission in a consultation period that closes on 5 December. As part of this consultation process there are public hearings in Ludlow on the 7 – 8 November 2011 and members may consider it appropriate for representations on the Council's position to be made at those hearings.

3.3 The primary statutory criterion is that every constituency in England must have an electorate of between 72,810 and 80,473 – that is 5% either side of the electoral quota of 76,641. In addition, the Commission may also take into account the following secondary criteria.

- Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- Local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010;
- Boundaries of existing constituencies, and
- Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

However, as the Commission emphasises: "It is essential to understand that none of the factors mentioned in the list above overrides the necessity to achieve an electorate in each constituency that is within the range allowed."

3.4 The weight given to the primary criterion means that Telford and Wrekin borough, with its 121,292 electors, cannot wholly comprise two constituencies.

- 3.5 In drawing up its proposals, the Commission has worked by European Electoral Region: an approach that was consulted upon in advance and won general support. This approach places Telford and Wrekin in the West Midlands Region. The Commission has then divided the region into three sub-regions:
- West Midlands MC and Warwickshire;
  - Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent;
  - Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin
- 3.6 Members should note that, in the consultation document the Commission concedes, “Our division of the West Midlands region into sub-regions is a purely practical approach. Respondents to our consultation are welcome to make counter-proposals based on other groupings of counties and unity authorities, if the statutory factors can be better reflected in those counter-proposals.”
- 3.7 One significant impact on the proposals as they affect Telford and Wrekin lies in the secondary criteria: the boundaries of existing constituencies. They say “We have tried to retain existing constituencies as part of our initial proposals where possible, so long as the other factors can also be satisfied.”
- 3.8 In this sub-region, two constituencies that are within 5% of the electoral quota remain unchanged – North Shropshire and Shrewsbury. In our neighbouring sub-region, South Staffordshire is also within 5% of quota and also remains unchanged. In effect, this has ‘penned in’ Telford and Wrekin to the north and north-west and to the south-west by the proposal to retain those existing constituencies. In turn, this consideration has also forced a southward solution for the residual area of Shropshire. Note also that Wyre Forest (Kidderminster) is also a retained constituency, and of course Staffordshire forms part of a separate sub region with Stoke on Trent.
- 3.9 The Commission has considered and respected, where possible, local government boundaries, another secondary criteria.
- 3.10 Of 54 constituencies proposed for the West Midlands, 29 are wholly contained within one local authority; 20 are made up of two local authority areas, and 5 are made up of three local authority areas. The Telford North and The Wrekin proposed constituency would be wholly contained within the Borough; the Bridgnorth and Telford South proposed constituency would span two local authorities – the Borough and Shropshire as is the case with the current constituencies. None of the proposals divides wards.
- 3.11 Having proposed retention of these constituencies the Commission appear to have been forced to work north to south when approaching Telford and Wrekin, with the only realistic ‘boundary’ that was open to it

for making up the electoral quota lying to the south and into Shropshire: A consideration that has also impacted on the remaining part of Shropshire as well. Accordingly, officers are of the view that the only practical option available to local consultees is either to accept the existing proposals or to put forward an alternative proposal within the overall envelope of the two proposed constituencies.

3.12 The important consideration for any consultee is to balance and test the Commission's present proposals and any alternative proposals against the statutory criteria.

3.13 The Commission's proposals meet the primary criterion, namely that the electorates of the proposed constituencies meet the quota. In respect of the secondary criteria, the position would appear to be justified as follows:-

- Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency. (In its guide to the review, the Commission states that these considerations "will primarily relate to physical geography such as mountains, hills lakes, rivers, estuaries and islands, rather than to human or social geography".) The proposed constituencies are not unduly large geographically, and it would be difficult to argue that they would be awkward in terms of physical features, shape and accessibility. The M54 has been used by the Commission as a defining boundary between the two proposed constituencies;
- Local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010 – one proposed constituency is wholly contained within Telford and Wrekin local authority, the other proposed constituency crosses local authority boundaries, but only covers two local authorities: Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire. This is the same as for the current constituencies;
- Boundaries of existing constituencies. In its guidance to the review, the Commission has stated that it "intends to have regard generally to existing constituencies as far as possible, as it does not consider that it would be appropriate to start from a 'blank sheet of paper'." Members will have their own views as to whether the proposals meet this intention or not.
- Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies – the proposals for Telford are the only proposals that partition one of the larger urban areas and tie the two parts to extensive rural hinterlands to a greater extent than is currently the case.

3.14 This report does not consider the names of either the Commission's proposed constituencies or of any alternative proposed constituencies. Members will have their own views on this matter. In its guidance to the review, the Commission has laid down the following guidelines for the naming of constituencies: when constituencies remain largely unchanged, the existing constituency name should usually be retained; generally, the Commission considers that the name should reflect the

main population centre(s) contained in the constituency, and the Commission adopts compass point names when there is not a more suitable name, such as in North Shropshire. Members may have a view on the name of Bridgnorth and Telford South given that South Telford includes significantly more population than Bridgnorth.

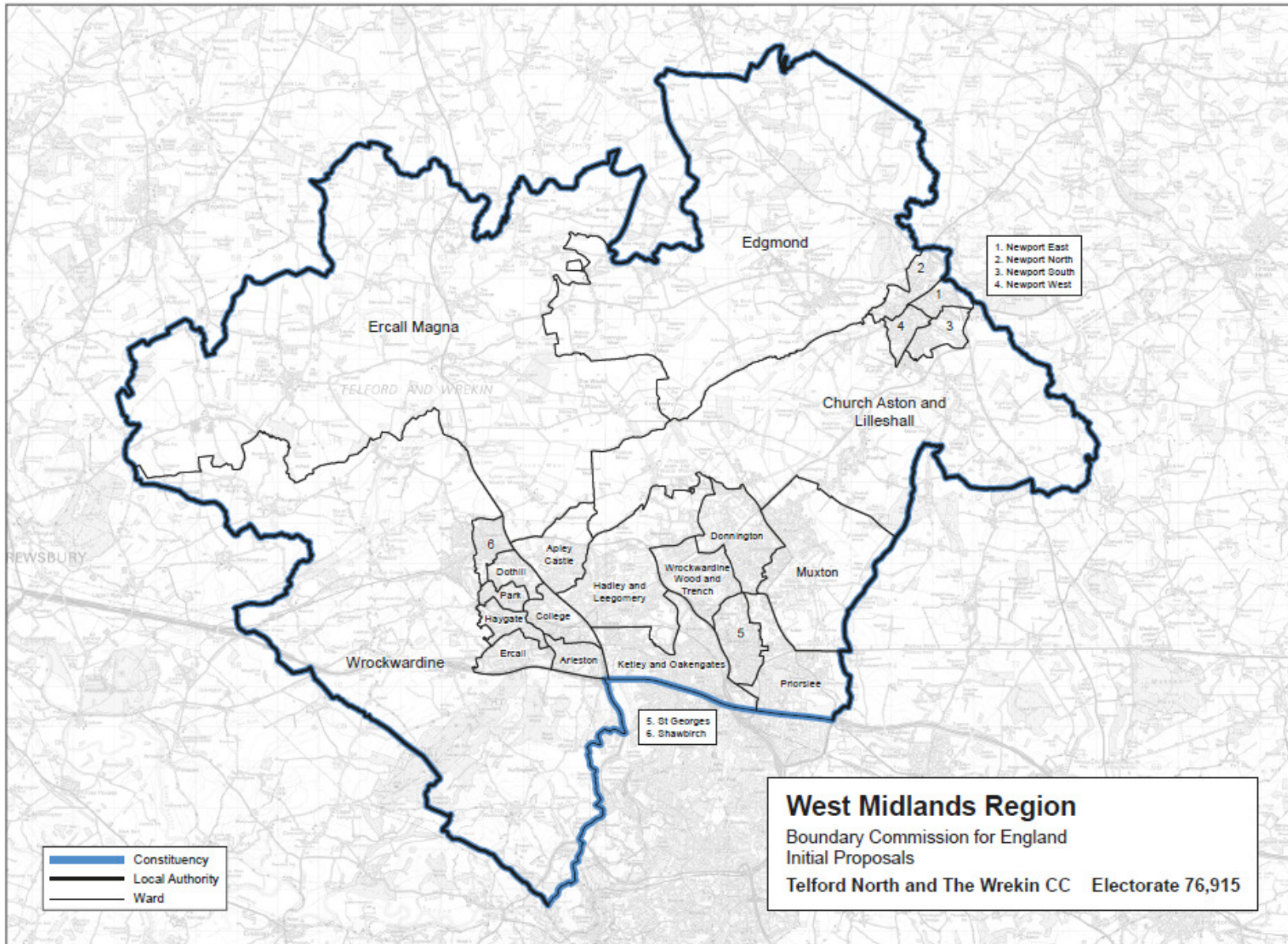
- 3.15 In conclusion, Members are asked to consider whether or not the Council should respond to this consultation.

The Commission requests that consultees say whether they approve of or object to the proposals, and where they object they are advised to say what they propose in place of the Commission's proposals. Of course, the Council's making a response does not preclude political groups or individual members also making their own submissions. The up-coming dates that are relevant are as follows:

Public Consultation – Ludlow	7 - 8 November
Deadline for submissions	5 December

Documents and information, including maps and statistics, used in the preparation of this report can be found on the website of the Boundary Commission for England at [www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk](http://www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk)

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