

Report to Community Governance Review Committee

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2010

Subject: Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

Officer Contact: I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive) (Tel 01992 564243)

Committee Secretary: P Sewell (Tel 01992 564532)

Recommendation:

That a report be submitted to the Council recommending as follows:

- (a) that the name of the Committee be changed to “Electoral and Community Governance Review Committee”;**
- (b) that the terms of reference of the Committee be extended to allow the Committee to respond to any proposed Parliamentary Constituency review Consultation if there is insufficient time to submit recommendations to the Council, all such responses to be subject to ratification at the next available Council meeting.**

Report:

1. The Government intends to embark on a review of Parliamentary Constituencies in England, although there is little information about how it will be conducted at this stage. The Boundary Commission, which will conduct the review, has to report to the Government by October 2013 in time for the General Election in May 2015.
2. Based on recent Government announcements it seems that the objective is to reduce the number of Parliamentary Constituencies in England by approximately 50. Anecdotally, it is understood that the review will give priority to electoral equality over any other local government boundaries or community links. It is also understood that the review will be conducted by examining constituencies in Cornwall and then working across the country, applying the target constituency electorate to boundaries to achieve the reduction and equality between the new constituencies. It has been said that the target electorate is 75,000 and if predictions of the “Cornwall” approach are correct, there is a possibility that even constituencies which currently have the target electorate will have to change.
3. What is unclear is the extent to which the Commission will consult Councils about changes. Assuming that there will be consultation by the Commission of the kind familiar from previous electoral reviews, it may be the case that the Commission’s response deadlines will not fit with the programme of Council meetings. Recommendation (b) seeks to address the need to meet those deadlines. This is designed to deal with situations where there may not be time to make recommendations to the Council. However, if the timescale permits, the Committee would still report to Council with recommendations. Item (b) requires a report for confirmation of the comments made if the delegated authority has been used.
4. It is also suggested that the Committee should adopt a new title to reflect the two kinds of reviews for which it is responsible.