

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Director of Corporate Services	Report Number: L88
To: Council	Date of meeting: 25 October 2011

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Council of the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for the reconfiguration of parliamentary constituency boundaries and the consultation arrangements that the Commission has put in place.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That it be indicated to the Boundary Commission for England that the Council supports the Commission's methodology and its initial proposals in so far as the South Suffolk constituency is concerned.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 1, Political and Managerial Leadership. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to engage with communities and provide community leadership	Low	Marginal	Ensure that Members can make an informed decision on the review

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Summary details of the proposals were notified to each Member of the Council on the day that they were published. The Boundary Commission for England has written to other interested parties such as local authorities (including Parish Councils), Members of Parliament and academics.

6. Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.1 Not directly related to this report.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 None.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is the independent public body responsible for reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. It is currently undertaking a review required by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which will reduce the overall number of UK Parliamentary seats from 650 to 600. The number of seats allocated for England is 502, each of which, apart from those on the Isle of Wight (which the Act expressly entitles to 2 MPs), must represent an electorate that is within + or – 5% of the UK electoral quota. The quota is derived from dividing the total number of electors by the number of MPs. Each constituency must therefore have no fewer than 72,810 electors and no more than 80,473.
- 8.2 The BCE used electorate figures from the latest annual update of the register of electors on 1 December 2010 and decided that, for its calculations of seat entitlements, it would use the existing European Parliamentary Regions as a starting point. In this way, the BCE calculated that the Eastern Region (which comprises Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk) was entitled to 56 seats, compared to the 58 that the Region currently contains. It then divided the Region into three sub-regions - Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire; Essex; and Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk – and, using the electoral quota, proceeded to calculate the number of constituencies for each sub-region. Apart from the overriding mathematical considerations, the BCE was able to take into account special geographical considerations, local government boundaries, the boundaries of existing constituencies and any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. It sought to avoid the creation of constituencies that would straddle more than one European Parliamentary Region and any division of district council wards between constituencies.
- 8.3 The BCE is required to report to the Government on the review by 1 October 2013 and it published its initial proposals on 13 September 2011. It envisages that Essex would have one less seat, as would Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Suffolk would retain its seven parliamentary constituencies. Nine existing constituencies in the Eastern Region would be left completely unchanged under the proposals and five of these are in Suffolk. This includes South Suffolk, which comprises the whole of the Babergh District Council area plus the St. Edmundsbury Borough Council wards of Cavendish and Clare. Other constituencies without proposed changes are Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney. The BCE has recommended reducing the size of the Bury St. Edmunds constituency by taking 3 Mid Suffolk District Council wards (Badwell Ash, Gislingham, and Rickingham & Walsham) and one St. Edmundsbury ward (Pakenham) out of that constituency and placing them in West Suffolk. To compensate for that change, Newmarket would be removed from West Suffolk and included in a Newmarket & Ely constituency together with the whole of the District of East Cambridge, which, as the BCE's initial report points out, virtually surrounds the town.
- 8.4 It was inevitable that implementing the review would require extensive changes to the existing pattern of constituencies. It may therefore be inferred that Suffolk has fared relatively well as regards the avoidance of potential upheaval. Nevertheless, substantial change is required throughout the region in order to comply with the new rules and it is expected that there will be opposition to some of the BCE's initial proposals. In that case, those responding to the consultation will need to bear in mind the impact of any counter-proposal on neighbouring constituencies and any potential “knock-on” effects further afield within the region. Failure to consider proposals on this larger canvas would make it very difficult for the BCE to consider the merits of any counter-proposal.

- 8.5 The Commission's consultation on its initial proposals ends on 5 December 2011 and the BCE wants to know whether consultees agree with the proposals for the Eastern Region and its choice of sub-regions. Respondents have been asked, where they disagree with a proposal, to suggest an alternative that also meets the statutory considerations.
- 8.6 During the 12 week initial consultation period the BCE will be holding 4 public hearings in the Region at which members of the public can register to attend and speak. Each hearing will be held over 2 days. The first will be at Colchester Town Hall on 31 October and 1 November, which will be followed by hearings at Norwich City Hall (3-4 November), Luton Town Hall (7-8 November) and Cambridge Best Western Gonville Hotel (10-11 November). After the initial consultation period the BCE will publish all the representations it has received and there will be 4 weeks during which written representations may be made with respect to the published representations on the initial proposals. The BCE will then consider the evidence presented and, if it considers it appropriate to amend its initial proposals, will publish revised proposals for the areas concerned and consult on them for a further period of 8 weeks. Once it has analysed the consultation responses to any revised proposals, the BCE will submit its final recommendations to the Government, which must then lay the BCE's report before Parliament.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Boundary Commission for England, Guide to the 2013 Review (August 2011)	Weblink - http://rr-bce-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/406678_Guide-to-the-2013-Review_acc.pdf?9d7bd4
(b) Boundary Commission for England, Eastern Region Initial Proposals (September 2011)	Weblink - http://rr-bce-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/2011_09_09_BCE_EasternIP_acc2.pdf?9d7bd4
(c) Eastern region Initial proposals regional map	Weblink - http://rr-bce-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/A0-Eastern-Region-Initial-Proposals.pdf?9d7bd4
(d) Map of the South Suffolk constituency	Attached

10. Background Documents

None

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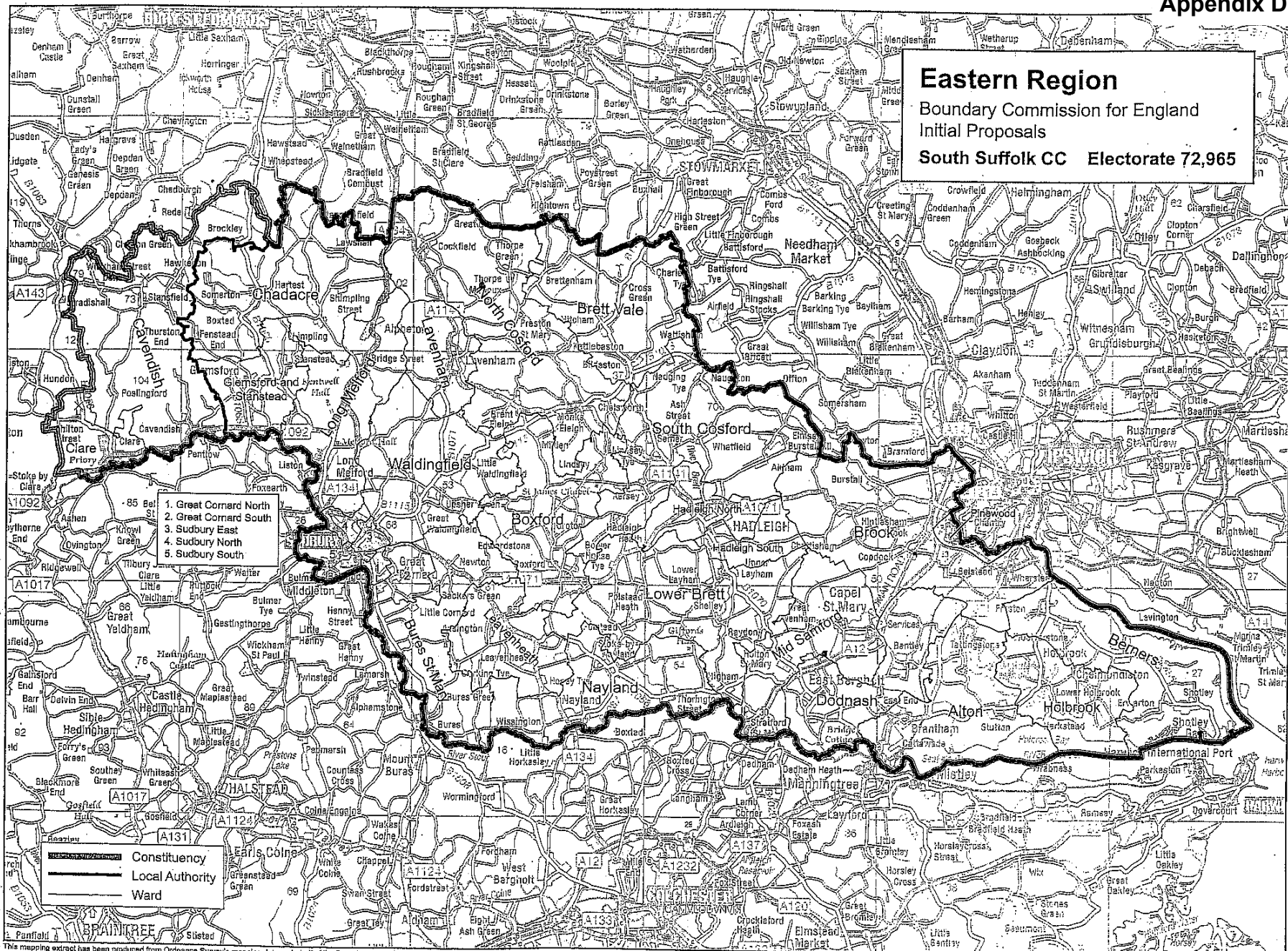
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Eastern Region
Boundary Commission for England
Initial Proposals
South Suffolk CC Electorate 72,965

1. Great Cornard North
2. Great Cornard South
3. Sudbury East
4. Sudbury North
5. Sudbury South

 Constituency
 Local Authority
 Ward



This mapping extract has been produced from Ordnance Survey's mapping data on behalf of the Boundary Commission for England © Crown copyright 2011.