

To: Council

On: 16 December 2021

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies- Consultation on Initial Proposals

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for Scotland has published its Initial Proposals for UK Parliamentary constituencies and invited comments on those Initial Proposals no later than 8 December 2021.
 - 1.2 A response was issued to meet the deadline. The response is attached as an appendix to this report. The Commission has indicated that provided an initial response was submitted to them by the specified deadline, they would be willing to accept a final response from the Council by 17 December 2021 once it had been considered at the Council meeting.
 - 1.3 The report seeks approval to the response and advises that there will be two further rounds of consultation in 2022.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
 - a) approve the response issued on behalf of the Council to the Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies - Publication of Initial Proposals, which forms the appendix to this report.
 - b) note that there will two further consultations on the Review during 2022.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Boundary Commission for Scotland has published its Initial Proposals for the 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies and has invited comments concerning those proposals to be submitted by 8 December 2021.
- 3.2 A copy of the consultation was issued to all elected members on 15 October 2021 and the consultation was also included on the Council's website.
- 3.3 The existing constituencies have been in place since 2005 and the last two reviews have not been implemented.
- 3.4 Scotland has been allocated 57 constituencies for the 2023 Review, two fewer than at present. Two constituencies, the Western Isles and Orkney and Shetland are protected by legislation and will not be subject to change.
- 3.5 Each constituency that the Commission recommends must contain no fewer than 69,724 Parliamentary electors, and no more than 77,062 (except the two protected constituencies) although the Commission can recommend a constituency with an electorate lower than the minimum if it is larger than 12,000 square kilometres.
- 3.6 Due to the reduction in the number of constituencies, and the requirements for each constituency to have a number of electors within set limits, the Commissioner has indicated that significant changes to existing constituencies are required.
- 3.7 The Commission's Initial Proposals are available through the following link
<https://www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/?q=reviews/2023-review-uk-parliament-constituencies>

4. Renfrewshire Constituencies

- 4.1 At present Renfrewshire Council administers elections for two UK Parliament constituencies. These are Paisley and Renfrewshire North and Paisley and Renfrewshire South.
- 4.2 In terms of the Commission's Initial Proposals, Renfrewshire will retain responsibility for two constituencies. However, both are different in several respects from the existing constituencies.

4.3 The main changes that are proposed that members should note are:

- Significant areas in Wards 10 and 11 have been included in a new Inverclyde and Bridge of Weir constituency.
 - Part of Glasgow City Council's Ward 4 in Cardonald has been included within the boundaries of the proposed Renfrew North constituency.
 - The boundaries between the Renfrew North and Renfrew South constituencies are different in some places than the boundaries between the two existing constituencies.
 - The new constituencies have been named Renfrew North and Renfrew South.
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5. Response to the Initial Proposals

5.1 The response on behalf of the Council forming the appendix to this report was submitted on 8 December 2021 to meet the Commission's deadline. The Commission has agreed to accept a final response from the Council by 17 December 2021 to enable it to be considered at the Council meeting today.

5.2 The response identifies some criticisms of the approach taken by the Commission in preparing their Initial Proposals. The Commission has developed its proposals in council area groupings with Renfrewshire being in a grouping with Inverclyde and Glasgow.

5.3 The main points raised in the response are:

- There is no justification for the grouping of Renfrewshire with Inverclyde and Glasgow
- A different approach should be taken with identifying how the reduction in the number of constituencies in Glasgow can be achieved by looking at its boundaries with other authorities, not just Renfrewshire
- The grouping of Renfrewshire with Inverclyde inevitably means that parts of existing Renfrewshire wards will be included in a new expanded parliamentary constituency based in Inverclyde
- The proposed names given to the two new Renfrewshire based constituencies should be changed. For example, both names refer to "Renfrew" rather than Renfrewshire even though no part of the town of Renfrew is in the proposed Renfrew South constituency.

5.4 After the current initial consultation period, the Commission plans to hold a six week secondary consultation where the representations made during the initial consultation will be published. During the secondary consultation period further representations may be made to comment on the submissions made initially. The Commission will also hold public hearings around Scotland to explain their proposals and to give an opportunity for others to make representations on those proposals.

- 5.5 After the end of the secondary consultation, the Commission will publish on its website all written representations received during the secondary consultation period, together with transcripts of the public hearings. There will then be a third consultation period of four weeks to make comments on representations made at public hearings. The Commission will then decide whether to alter its Initial Proposals in view of the representations it has received. If the Initial Proposals are revised the resulting Revised Proposals will be published for consultation. The target for the Commission is to submit its recommendations to the Speaker of the UK Parliament is 1 July 2023. Members will be kept updated on developments throughout this process.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – None.
4. **Legal** – As detailed in the report.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** –None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Risk** – None.
10. **Privacy Impact** – None
11. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.
12. **Climate Risk** – None.

List of Background Papers – None

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APPENDIX

2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies

Response to Initial Proposals

1. Introduction

This response is issued on behalf of Renfrewshire Council.

It is noted that the last two reviews of UK parliamentary constituencies have been cancelled which means that the existing constituencies have remained in place since 2005. Therefore, in principle it is accepted that a review is overdue and necessary.

It is also noted that there will be two further public consultations with the Commission's final recommendations being submitted by July 2023.

Therefore, this response concentrates on the overall approach being taken in the Commission's Initial Proposals although because they are related, there is also comment on the details of the constituency boundaries for those constituencies administered by Renfrewshire.

2. Constituency Design Approach

The main area of concern regarding the Initial Proposals is the "constituency design approach" set out in the consultation document.

Renfrewshire is included in a grouping with Inverclyde and Glasgow City Council. The logic for this is difficult to understand.

The existing Inverclyde constituency is below the electoral quota the Commission has used for the purpose of the review. In the three area grouping that has been used, that constituency only shares a boundary with the two existing Paisley and Renfrewshire constituencies. This establishes a self-fulfilling outcome that to achieve the electoral quota for a revised Inverclyde based constituency that constituency will need to include population centres from either one or both of the Renfrewshire based constituencies.

In the view of the Council any grouping involving Inverclyde ought to have also included the only other constituency with which it currently shares a border, which is North Ayrshire and Arran. It is noted that the last-mentioned constituency is remaining unchanged in the Initial Proposal. It is submitted that parts of the Inverclyde constituency have as good geographical and transport links to the North Ayrshire and Arran area, particularly along the Clyde Coast as they do with the areas of Renfrewshire included in the proposed Inverclyde and Bridge of Weir constituency.

It is also submitted that there is no reason why East Renfrewshire constituency is maintained as a stand-alone constituency outwith any grouping which means that it is not included in any consideration of changes to the boundaries to the Paisley and Renfrewshire South constituency.

This approach also immediately excludes several of the factors established by rules for the distribution of seats namely 5(a), (c) and (e).

In particular, it excludes the existing Scottish Parliamentary boundaries between East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Councils.

The position of Glasgow is even more fundamental. At present the seven Glasgow City constituencies are bordered by nine other constituencies that are dealt with by six local authorities: Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire Councils.

No explanation is given as to why Renfrewshire is the only neighbouring area included in a grouping with Glasgow. The grouping is also undermined by the published proposal which includes part of an existing Glasgow constituency being transferred to West Dunbartonshire, which is not part of the grouping.

It is suggested that more thought needs to be given to the way Glasgow is dealt with in the review given that the main aim is to achieve a reduction of one constituency within the City. The Council believes the focus should be on the boundaries between Glasgow and all of its neighbouring authorities, not just Renfrewshire, particularly as many areas of Glasgow are likely to have greater connections with those neighbouring authorities than Cardonald does with Renfrewshire.

Therefore, at this stage, the inclusion of part of a Glasgow ward within the boundaries of the proposed North constituency is not supported.

Once these wider matters are addressed, it would be appropriate at that stage to address how the boundaries in Paisley between the two Renfrewshire based constituencies are drawn.

3. Constituency Names

If the new constituencies are to be taken forward, it would be asked that the proposed names of both Renfrewshire based constituencies are reconsidered.

The names of the existing constituencies both include reference to Paisley, which is the largest town in the area. Paisley is not mentioned in the names of either of the new constituencies. Renfrew, the town rather than the county name, is used for both of the new constituencies although no part of the town of Renfrew is in the South constituency.

It is suggested that a better name for the South constituency would be "Paisley and Renfrewshire SouthWest." While I would suggest that the North constituency retains the name "Paisley and Renfrewshire North".

It is noted that the three Scottish Parliamentary constituencies are Renfrewshire North and West, Renfrewshire South and Paisley so there is no conflict.

It is hoped that you will consider these comments on the Initial Proposals and take them into account when producing revised proposals next year.

Ken Graham
Head of Corporate Governance