

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

Council: 26 October 2011

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**Subject: Sixth Review of the UK Parliamentary Constituencies**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** To inform the Council of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's provisional proposals for the sixth review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies and to recommendations thereon.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** The Boundary Commission for Scotland is responsible for reviewing the boundaries for UK Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in Scotland. The Commission published its initial proposals for public consultation on Thursday 13 October 2011. The Consultation period will last for 12 weeks, until 4 January 2012. Copies of the initial proposals together with maps have been published in the Council Offices, Garshake Road and Rosebery Place and main libraries.
- 2.2** As part of the consultation process, the Boundary Commission will hold a series of public hearings around Scotland during November. The hearing for West Dunbartonshire and neighbouring authorities will be held in Glasgow on 22 November 2011 and will be heard by Sheriff Principal Craig Scott.
- 2.3** When developing its proposals the Boundary Commission was required to apply the requirement set down by Parliament that each mainland constituency has nearly the same electorate. The electoral quota for the UK is 76,641.2. Furthermore, it had to ensure that no constituency exceeds the maximum permitted area of 13,000 square kilometres. The electorate of each constituency, with a few specified exceptions, has to be within 5% of the United Kingdom electoral quota – that is, an electorate no fewer than 72,810 and no more than 80,473. In Scotland this means that there will be 52 UK Parliamentary constituencies instead of 59. In the UK, the number will be reduced from 650 to 600.
- 2.4** The electorate for the West Dunbartonshire County Constituency as at 1 December 2010 was 66,738, which is well below the required quota.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** The Boundary Commission has proposed that a new constituency be formed namely 'West Dunbartonshire and Bearsden' which will comprise the whole of the former West Dunbartonshire County Constituency plus Ward 2 – Bearsden North, resulting in a total electorate of 77,614.

- 3.2** This appears to be a reasonable proposal given the geography of the area and the practicalities of administering an election; the West Dunbartonshire election team has experience and knowledge of conducting elections in Bearsden North as this falls within the Clydebank and Milngavie Constituency for the Scottish Parliamentary elections. The most important factor being that the whole of the West Dunbartonshire County Constituency remains intact and is not split.
- 3.3** The only other practical solution would be for Wards 10 (Helensburgh Central) and 11 (Helensburgh and Lomond South) in Argyll and Bute to be combined with West Dunbartonshire (in place of Bearsden North) which would result in an electorate of 79,644, which is very close to the upper limit of 80,473. If only Ward 11 (Helensburgh and Lomond south) was to be combined with West Dunbartonshire it would result in an electorate of 73,261 which is very close to the lower limit of 72,810. Therefore, with either of these two options there would be an increased risk of a further review of the boundaries as a decrease or increase in the electorate of just over 1% could result in the statutory limits being exceeded.

#### **4. People Implications**

- 4.1** There are no direct implications for employees of the Council as the Returning Officer will retain responsibility for one Parliamentary Constituency.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** The costs associated with the administration of the UK Parliamentary elections are met by central government and therefore there are no direct financial implications for this Council.

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** If the proposals go ahead, the Returning Officer will not have control over the choice of polling places to be used in East Dunbartonshire as this falls within the remit of that authority. However, given that the Returning Officer has experience of working with East Dunbartonshire Council during Scottish Parliamentary elections and has knowledge of the proposed polling places in Bearsden North, the risk of being unable to identify a suitable polling place in the Bearsden North area is very small.

#### **7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 7.1** No equalities group will be adversely affected by these proposals. All polling places, whether they are located within or outwith West Dunbartonshire, are assessed for their suitability for disabled and elderly persons when polling schemes are agreed by the relevant local authorities.

## **8. Strategic Assessment**

- 8.1** In terms of social and economic regeneration it is important that the people of West Dunbartonshire have a single representative in the UK Parliament who can represent their views and needs.

## **9. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 9.1** It is recommended that this Council informs the Boundary Commission for Scotland that it supports the proposal to form a 'West Dunbartonshire and Bearsden Constituency', as described within the consultation paper, and therefore there is no requirement for this Council to make representations on the proposal at the public hearing on 22 November.

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**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 11 October 2011**

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**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** Correspondence and enclosures from the Boundary Commission for Scotland on the Sixth Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies.

**Wards Affected:** None affected