

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 12 December 2023

**BY:** Executive Director for Council Resources

**SUBJECT:** Response to Boundary Commission Review

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek ratification of an alternative proposal for constituency alignment, submitted to the local inquiry held by the Boundary Commission for Scotland.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the Boundary Commission for Scotland consultation on the proposed new Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies is ongoing and that a local inquiry session was held in Musselburgh on 7 December 2023.
- 2.2 To ratify the alternative proposal for constituency alignment that was submitted to that local inquiry as detailed in paragraph 3.3 of this report, noting that this could not be approved in advance as a consequence of the timing of the local inquiry.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Boundary Commission for Scotland (known as Boundaries Scotland) commenced its second review of Scottish Parliamentary constituencies in September 2022. On 17 May 2023, it published its initial proposals, and on 27 June 2023 the Council agreed to submit an objection to the proposals. At that time, it was acknowledged that an alternative proposal could not be submitted as it would be necessary to liaise with neighbouring local authorities to consider the impact of any alternative on those areas. The Council asked for an opportunity to be heard at a session of the local inquiries and to expand upon an alternative proposal at that time.

- 3.2 Work was undertaken by the Council Leader, in conjunction with political colleagues in other areas, to consider an alternative proposal. However, this had not yet been brought to Council for approval. On 15 November 2023, Boundaries Scotland advised the dates of the local inquiries, in particular that the proposals affecting East Lothian and the Midlothian North and Musselburgh constituencies would be considered at a session on 7 December 2023.
- 3.3 As there was no opportunity to have an alternative proposal formally considered by Council in advance of that date, officers circulated the proposal to all Councillors informally for their views. As there was majority support for the alternative proposal, the Council Leader presented this to the local inquiry session on 7 December 2023, on the basis that it would be formally ratified at this meeting. The alternative proposal is as follows:
- Prestonpans would be retained within the East Lothian constituency.
  - Midlothian North and Musselburgh would include the areas of Musselburgh that Boundaries Scotland was proposing to move into Midlothian South
  - This would keep the electorate of Midlothian North and Musselburgh more or less as it is currently, around 59,000.
  - It would give an electorate of around 67,500 for the remaining East Lothian constituency, which is at the upper end of the scale of electorate numbers but is not the largest of the proposed new constituencies.
  - This would leave the proposed Midlothian South constituency short of electorate numbers but there are other representations being considered at the local inquiry on the Clyde Valley & Tweeddale constituency which will be considering this area in more detail, and this could be addressed in a number of different ways.
- 3.4 Following consideration of all evidence submitted during the local inquiry sessions, any revised proposals from Boundaries Scotland will be offered for further public consultation with final recommendations submitted to Scottish Ministers by 1 May 2025. If subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament, the new boundaries will be effective at the next Scottish Parliament election, expected in May 2026.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 If the original proposals are accepted, the change in electoral boundaries will have impacts for representation of voters, delivery of elections and for residents, staff and Elected Members engaging with Members of Parliament. The alternative proposal would minimise these impacts to a great extent.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial - none  
6.2 Personnel - none  
6.3 Other - none

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Report to Council of 27 June 2023 - Response to Boundary Commission Review  
[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16952/east\\_lothian\\_council](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/16952/east_lothian_council)

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