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## **PROPOSALS FOR PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ESSEX, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA AND THURROCK AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S AREA.**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 On 8 May 2003 the Boundary Commission for England published provisional recommendations for changes to sixteen of the seventeen existing parliamentary constituencies in the area covered by the county of Essex, and the unitary authorities of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.
- 1.2 The combined area of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock will be allocated an extra, eighteenth, parliamentary seat. The allocation of the seat will require major changes to be made to some of the existing constituency boundaries.
- 1.3 This report summarises the main points in the news release from the Boundary Commission for England on their proposals for parliamentary constituency boundaries in the county of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock and the impact of those proposals on the Rochford District. Representations about the proposals should be submitted by 15 June 2003.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Following the Periodic Electoral Reviews undertaken by the Local Government Commission for England, (now the Boundary Committee for England), the new ward boundaries in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock were confirmed and came into effect from May 2001-2004. These reviews resulted in sixteen of the new wards in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock being divided between constituencies.
- 2.2 In order to remedy this, the Boundary Commission for England have undertaken a review of the above constituencies (by virtue of their powers under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992). Their provisional recommendations were published on 8 May 2003 by a notice appearing in local newspapers. A copy of the recommendations, together with detailed maps, is on deposit at the Council's offices.

### **3 BASIS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The review was undertaken using electorate figures from Registers of Electors published on 16 February 2000 and an electoral quota of 69,934 electors per seat.

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- 3.2 On this basis, Essex County (excluding the unitaries) has a parliamentary electorate of 1,005,343 and a theoretical entitlement to 14.38 seats; Southend-on-Sea (125,443) a theoretical entitlement to 1.79 seats and Thurrock (102,643) a theoretical entitlement to 1.47 seats.
- 3.3 If the Commission allocated 14 seats to the County of Essex, the average would be 71,810, (1,876 above the electoral quota of 69,934); two seats to Southend-on-Sea, the average would be 62,722 (7,212 below the electoral quota); and two seats to Thurrock, the average would be 51,322 (18,612 below the electoral quota).
- 3.4 The combined area of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock currently has seventeen constituencies with an electorate of 1,233,429 and a theoretical entitlement to 17.64 seats.
- 3.5 The Commission noted that:
- a) if they were to continue to pair Essex and Thurrock and to allocate an extra, sixteenth, seat the county average would be 69,249, only 685 below the electoral quota;
  - b) currently Southend –on-Sea has seventeen wards, with an average electorate of almost 7,400 per ward. To allocate two seats wholly to Southend-on Sea would lead to the creation of a seat containing eight wards and an electorate of only 59,000, which would be more than 10,000 below the electoral quota; and
  - c) if they were to allocate 18 seats to the combined area of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, the county average would be 68,524, which is 1,410 below the electoral quota.
- 3.6 The Commission decided that they would not treat Southend-on-Sea separately, because it would result in an electorate that would be too low, and that they would allocate eighteen seats to the combined area of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.
- 3.7 The existing seventeen seats in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock have electorates ranging from 65,233 in Southend West BC to 78,569 in Billericay CC, a disparity of 13,336.

#### **4 PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT**

- 4.1 Under the Commission's provisional recommendations the disparity between electorates of their proposed eighteen seats is reduced to 9,976, and all eighteen seats have electorates within 6,095 of the electoral quota and 5,291 of the county average.

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- 4.2 The Commission propose that the Rochford District ward of Ashingdon and Canewdon be moved from its present place in Rayleigh constituency and included, with Barling and Sutton ward and Foulness and Great Wakering ward, in the Rochford and Southend East constituency to increase its electorate and that this constituency be renamed Southend East County Constituency (68,064) to reflect its altered composition. Members may consider that the constituency should retain some reference to the District (for example by including Rochford East in the title), rather than simply being renamed as Southend East.
- 4.3 The Commission also propose that the remaining sixteen wards of the District of Rochford (including Rochford ward itself and Hawkwell South from the former Rochford and Southend East constituency) be joined to three wards of the District of Basildon (Wickford Castleton, Wickford North and Wickford Park). This constituency is to be renamed Rayleigh and Wickford County Constituency (73,815) and would no longer include any wards from Chelmsford Borough Council. Maps showing the proposals as they relate to the Rochford District are appended.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee considers the summary of the proposals for the Parliamentary County Constituency boundaries in the Rochford District and makes representations, if desired, to the Boundary Commission for England before 15 June 2003.

Sarah Fowler

Head of Administrative and Member Services

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### **Background Papers:**

News Release: Proposals for Parliamentary Constituency boundaries in the Counties of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

For further information please contact Barbara Cronin on:-

Tel:- 01702 318136

E-Mail:- [barbara.cronin@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:barbara.cronin@rochford.gov.uk)