

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 5 DECEMBER 2012

PORTFOLIO: OVERALL STRATEGY AND POLICY DIRECTION

REPORT FROM HEAD OF INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

SUBJECT: 2013 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

1.1 To respond to the 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies as follows:-

- a) to note the revised proposals for the Constituencies of Rayleigh and Wickford and Rochford & Southend East;
- b) to recommend that the name of the Rochford & Southend East Constituency should remain, and should not be altered to Southend East & Rochford, as proposed.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Boundary Commission is conducting a review of Parliamentary Constituencies on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502. They also require that every constituency (apart from the two covering the Isle of Wight) must have an electorate that is no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473; that is 5% either side of the electoral quota of 76,641.
- 2.2 The Boundary Commission took an initial decision that the Eastern region is allocated 56 constituencies, a reduction of 2. Specifically, Essex is reduced from 18 to 17 constituencies. This is based on an Essex-wide electorate (including Southend and Thurrock) of 1,280,544, which produces an allocation of 17 constituencies with an average electorate of 75,326, which is 1,315 below the electoral quota.
- 2.3 In respect of the two existing constituencies that cover the Rochford District the original proposal from the Boundary Commission was as follows:-
 - a) Rochford and Southend East Constituency – this would include the wards covering Hawkwell, Hockley and Hullbridge in addition to the existing wards of Ashingdon and Canewdon, Barling and Sutton, Foulness and Great Wakering, and Rochford and the Southend wards of Kursaal, Shoeburyness, Southchurch, Thorpe and West Shoebury. This gives an electorate of 76,697. (The wards of Milton, St Lukes and Victoria in Southend are transferred into Southend West.).
 - b) Rayleigh & Wickford Constituency – as the wards covering Hawkwell, Hockley and Hullbridge have been placed in the Rochford and Southend

East Constituency, the proposal was to include, along with all the wards comprising Rayleigh & Rawreth, and the 3 Basildon wards in Wickford, 3 additional wards of the Borough of Basildon (Pitsea North West, Pitsea South East and Vange) and the Rettendon & Runwell ward of the Borough of Chelmsford. This gives an electorate of 76,639.

- 2.4 The Council considered these proposals on 2 November 2011 and agreed that the Boundary Commission be advised that support is given to the counter proposals relating to the District developed by the Conservative Party in relation to the Eastern Region.
- 2.5 Following the consultation exercise, the Boundary Commission has published revised proposals for consultation to 10 December 2012. Its proposals for Essex are set out in appendix 1.
- 2.6 In respect of the two constituencies that cover the Rochford District, the following is proposed:-
- a) Rochford and Southend East Constituency – this would include the 3 wards covering Hawkwell in addition to the current wards of Ashingdon and Canewdon, Barling and Sutton, Foulness and Great Wakering, Rochford, and the Southend wards of Kursaal, Milton, St Lukes, Shoeburyness, Southchurch, Thorpe and West Shoebury. (The Southend ward of Victoria is transferred into Southend West).
 - b) In addition, the Commission has recommended that the constituency be renamed Southend East and Rochford in order to reflect the fact that the majority of voters in this constituency will come from Southend. However, in these revised proposals, the existing constituency gains the 3 Hawkwell wards and loses the Southend ward of Victoria, so the number of Rochford District residents in the constituency actually increases over the current number. It is therefore recommended that the Council suggests to the Boundary Commission that the name should remain Rochford and Southend East.
 - c) Rayleigh and Wickford Constituency – this would include the wards covering Hockley and Hullbridge, all the wards comprising Rayleigh and Rawreth, the 3 Basildon wards in Wickford plus 2 additional wards from Basildon – Pitsea North West and Vange.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 None.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Information and Customer Services

Background Papers:-

Boundary Commission for England Revised Proposals for the Eastern Region.

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

**Extract from Boundary Commission for England 2013 Review
Revised Proposals for Essex***Introduction*

AC28 The Essex sub-region is the most southerly of the eastern counties of England. It is bordered to the south by the Thames Estuary and to the east by the lower reaches of the North Sea. It has county boundaries to the south-west with Greater London; to the west with Hertfordshire (with the boundary largely defined by the River Lee and its tributary the Stort); to the north-west with Cambridgeshire; and to the north, along the River Stour, with Suffolk.

AC29 It should be noted that, within the sub-region, there are two unitary authorities, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea. All references to the Essex sub-region which follow include these two authorities, while recognising their status.

AC30 Essex has a diverse pattern of settlements. The new towns of Basildon and Harlow were originally developed to resettle Londoners following the destruction of housing during World War Two. Epping Forest and the Metropolitan Green Belt have both acted as protective barriers to further urban spread. However, the major population centres of Basildon, Southend, and Thurrock are within the Thames Gateway and, as such, are designated for additional development. To the north of the green belt, with the exception of several major towns such as Colchester and Chelmsford, the county is largely rural. This is important when considering constituency boundaries, in that we have not always been able to create constituencies in which all parts can be said to have local ties or, indeed, simple transport links.

AC31 The main airport in the sub-region is London Stansted, which serves destinations across the UK and in Europe and Asia. Applications have been made to build an additional runway, which would significantly expand operations at Stansted. The Port of Tilbury is one of Britain's major ports.

AC32 The M25 and M11 motorways both cross the sub-region in the south and west, linking those parts of the county with Kent, Hertfordshire, and Cambridgeshire. The A127 and A13 trunk roads are important radial routes, connecting the southern and eastern parts of the county with London. The A12 is also a significant conduit, running north-east across the county around Chelmsford and Colchester and on into Suffolk.

Representations

AC33 There are currently 18 constituencies in the sub-region, only five of which (Chelmsford, Colchester, Rayleigh and Wickford, Saffron Walden, and Thurrock) have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. All of the remaining 13 have electorates below the 5% limit. The Commission's initial proposals are to reduce the number of constituencies to 17 and to avoid crossing any sub-regional boundaries.

While there have been a small number of counter-proposals on this matter, including a number to link Essex with Hertfordshire, all political parties and the vast majority of public responses have been in favour of the Commission's proposal and we see no reason, from the representations we have seen, to change this approach.

AC34 Given the number of constituencies with electorates below the 5% limit, it is inevitable that there should be significant boundary changes. Indeed, the Commission's initial proposals changed all but two constituencies (Colchester and Thurrock). Five of the proposed 17 constituencies have, nonetheless, met with almost universal approval. Braintree and Witham, Colchester, Harwich and Clacton, North East Essex, and Thurrock have all received positive comment from members of the public and none of the political parties have raised any objections to their make-up. We do not, therefore, recommend any changes to these proposed constituencies.

AC35 By far the most contentious of the Commission's proposals has been the movement of the Leigh and West Leigh wards from Southend West constituency to Castle Point constituency. We have received numerous objections from local residents (e.g. IP/002427; IP/004553; IP/006402), from local councillors (e.g. IP/003434), from David Amess, MP for Southend West (IP/015444), and from the Conservative Party. Almost without exception these objectors are in favour of the Conservative Party counter-proposal (IP/025304). In addition, we have received representations from many individuals and community organisations concerned that the knock-on effects of the Commission's initial proposals move the Hockley and Hullbridge wards from Rayleigh and Wickford into Rochford and Southend East. The Conservatives' counter-proposals have the advantage of dealing with these issues too.

AC36 We have conducted site visits around Castle Point, Leigh, and Southend-on-Sea. While we can see the rationale behind the Commission's initial proposals, we are of the view that, in terms of both localities and natural geographical boundaries, Leigh has much more in common with Southend than it does with Castle Point. As has been pointed out by many Leigh residents, the initially proposed constituency boundary within Southend is difficult to define—and indeed much of it actually divides individual streets. The alternative proposal (supported by almost all of the representations received) moves Pitsea South East into Castle Point constituency and Leigh and West Leigh wards into Southend West constituency. While we consider that this option also has its flaws (addressed later in this report—see paragraphs AC37–AC43), it does seem to us to be by far the better proposal.

AC37 Given our views above, and in order to comply with Rule 2 of Schedule 2 to the 1986 Parliamentary Constituencies Act (electoral quotas), it is necessary to transfer several wards from the Rochford and Southend East constituency into the Rayleigh and Wickford constituency. We therefore propose to move the Hockley Central, Hockley North, Hockley West, and Hullbridge wards back into the Rayleigh and Wickford constituency. We have received many representations from members

of the public and from community organisations requesting this change, and both Hockley and Hullbridge Parish Councils (IP/010538 and IP/011319 respectively) have also been supportive. We have, as with the Leigh/Castle Point issue described above, conducted site visits to each of these wards.

AC38 We are particularly grateful to the Chair of Hullbridge Parish Council (IP/011319), who provided some compelling evidence of local ties concerning school catchment areas and third sector organisations. All of the latter appear to provide services to Hullbridge and Hockley from bases in Rayleigh. The local Citizens Advice Bureau (IP/013224) shared its own views and provided information concerning public transport links. The linked point common to all of the representations is that, if these proposals are accepted, one Member of Parliament will represent all of these communities.

AC39 The transfer of wards into Rayleigh and Wickford, as described above, would make it more than 5% above the electoral quota. In consequence, we propose that the Pitsea South East, and Rettendon and Runwell wards be transferred from the initially proposed Rayleigh and Wickford constituency to the Castle Point, and Billericay and Great Dunmow constituencies respectively.

AC40 With regard to the Pitsea South East ward transfer into the Castle Point constituency, this change completes the counter-clockwise moves required to facilitate transferring the Leigh and West Leigh wards back into the Southend West constituency. The overall effect of these various transfers does separate the two Pitsea wards (Pitsea North West and Pitsea South East). However, we have, again, conducted a site visit and it is clear to us that they do not fit together as seamlessly as Leigh, West Leigh, and Southend. Indeed, there is a significant barrier between the two in the shape of the A127 trunk road. We have paid specific attention to the secondary representations made concerning Essex, in order to determine whether there has emerged a strong local objection to these counter-proposals (made by the Conservative Party and others), but have found very little.

AC41 Our decision to recommend the transfer of Rettendon and Runwell ward into Billericay and Great Dunmow constituency has two distinct, but connected, benefits: it ensures that the proposed Rayleigh and Wickford constituency complies, in terms of electorate numbers, with the statutory electorate range; and it also allows us to deal with the many representations that we have received from members of the public concerning the ward of Galleywood, which sits adjacent to the town of Chelmsford. The Commission's initial proposals exclude Galleywood from the Chelmsford constituency, placing the ward in the neighbouring constituency of Billericay and Great Dunmow. This was done in order to ensure that both constituencies have electorate numbers within 5% of the quota.

AC42 The Commission's proposals gave the Chelmsford constituency an electorate of 73,426. Returning the Galleywood ward (which contains 4,409 electors) creates a constituency of 77,835. Its removal from the Billericay and Great Dunmow

constituency is compensated for by the inclusion of the Rettendon and Runwell ward, as mentioned above.

AC43 The counter-proposal to maintain the existing Chelmsford constituency unchanged has met with almost universal approval (e.g. IP/001692; IP/002444; IP/003638). It does, however, have its downside. The constituency of Billericay and Great Dunmow, which partially surrounds it, is not ideal. It is an unusual shape, has poor transport links, and its various communities fall into three different local authority areas. We have received a number of criticisms of the Commission's proposals in this regard. We have decided, however, after much deliberation, that it constitutes the 'least worst' option, in that any attempts to significantly change the proposal results in anomalies elsewhere. It is inevitable that in rural Essex, as in other parts of the country, constituencies made up of many small settlements will be large, even ungainly, in nature.

AC44 We turn now to the proposed Brentwood and Ongar constituency. The Commission has proposed that the Thurrock ward of Orsett be moved to the Brentwood and Ongar constituency. The Conservative Party counter-proposals, supported by several members of the public (e.g. IP/010327; IP/009501), would seek to return this ward to the Basildon and Thurrock East constituency, thus reducing the number of constituencies crossing the boundary between the unitary authority of Thurrock and the County of Essex to one. While this proposal has merit, it does also have down sides. It would require several other wards to be moved in order to ensure that the Brentwood and Ongar constituency (and the neighbouring constituency of Epping Forest) remained within the numerical constraints imposed by the legislation. We have visited the Orsett ward, and we consider that Orsett's inclusion in the Brentwood and Ongar constituency is the best way of meeting the statutory factors across the sub-region as a whole. Local bus services are available, and we were able to drive along the A128 from Brentwood to Orsett in no more than 20 minutes. We have decided, therefore, not to make any recommendations to change the Commission's proposals in this regard.

AC45 There have been a number of representations concerning the Brentwood and Ongar, and Epping Forest constituencies which relate to the above issues. The Conservative Party and several local MPs and councillors (e.g. IP/018613; IP/023958) have proposed returning Lambourne ward to Brentwood and Ongar from Epping Forest. This would require several other ward moves between the Epping Forest, Brentwood and Ongar, Harlow, and Billericay and Great Dunmow constituencies, in order to ensure that all of these constituencies have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. Others, including Epping Forest District Council (IP/014624), are content with the Commission's proposals as they stand. The latter provide some compelling evidence with regard to Lambourne in particular, pointing out the links with Theydon Bois, the local transport infrastructure, and simple proximity. We are persuaded by these arguments and have decided, therefore, to leave the Commission's initial proposals unchanged in this regard.

AC46 The Commission's proposals for North West Essex have been supported by all three Parliamentary political parties. The Liberal Democrats and the Conservative

Party have, however, along with many members of the public, proposed that the name of the constituency revert to Saffron Walden. We comment further on this matter at the end of our report on this sub-region (see paragraph AC51). There have also been a number of representations expressing concern for several wards to the south of Stansted Airport. Most have no counter-proposals to make. However, despite their party at the regional level supporting the Commission's proposals, the Saffron Walden branch of the Liberal Democrats (IP/018563) has proposed quite significant changes in an effort to retain as many Uttlesford District Council wards as possible within one constituency. Their proposals are not without merit. However, they do impact on three other proposed constituencies: Braintree and Witham, Maldon, and Billericay and Great Dunmow. Braintree and Witham, in particular, has overwhelming support from all three Parliamentary political parties and from members of the public, and we would be loath to propose any changes here. In addition, the counter-proposal for North West Essex itself does, by removing the wards of Rayne and Three Fields, create a very unusually shaped constituency with two distinct parts joined together by just one small ward, Bumpstead. John Mitchell (IP/023761) on behalf of Uttlesford District Council has also made counter-proposals providing a similar rationale. Their proposals do produce a more balanced alternative for North West Essex; however, they too impact significantly upon three other neighbouring constituencies. Overall, these counter-proposals appear to create as many problems as they solve. We have decided, therefore, not to recommend any changes to the Commission's initial proposals for North West Essex other than the name change, which we deal with later (see paragraphs AC51–AC52).

AC47 A number of individual members of the public have taken the time and trouble to produce detailed counter-proposals across the region. We are grateful to them for their interest and are conscious that several representations have informed our own deliberations as we have worked towards viable alternative proposals which reflect public, local authority, and political party views. We have dealt with those proposals that cross all three sub-regions in paragraphs AC23–AC27. However, several detailed proposals focus on Essex specifically. For example, Edward Carlsson Browne (IP/019519) and David Shipton (IP/002049) support several of the Commission's initial proposals, including North West Essex, but would both deal with Billericay and Great Dunmow (albeit in different ways) by splitting the existing Chelmsford constituency. There has been almost universal support for retaining Chelmsford unchanged, and our recommendation follows public opinion in this regard.

AC48 We examined one other independent counter-proposal in some detail. John Chanin (IP/011111) produced two alternative proposals, only the second of which met the statutory electorate range. While it contains various assumptions with which we would disagree (that Basildon would ideally be contained in one constituency, for example), nevertheless the various proposals have merit. The one overriding downside, however, is the need, in order to make numerical sense of all of his other proposals, to create a new Great Dunmow constituency which crosses four local authorities and stretches for over 30 miles from South Hanningfield (south of Chelmsford) to Berden (north-west of Stansted Airport) on the border with Hertfordshire. We eventually rejected Mr Chanin's proposals for this reason.

AC49 Having carefully considered all of the representations and counter-proposals received, we have decided to recommend that:

- a. the Leigh and West Leigh wards be returned to the Southend West constituency;
- b. the Milton and St Luke's wards be transferred from Southend West into the Rochford and Southend East constituency;
- c. the Hockley Central, Hockley North, Hockley West, and Hullbridge wards be returned to the Rayleigh and Wickford constituency;
- d. the Pitsea South East, and Rettendon and Runwell wards be transferred from the initially proposed Rayleigh and Wickford constituency to the Castle Point, and Billericay and Great Dunmow constituencies respectively; and
- e. the Galleywood ward be returned to the existing Chelmsford constituency.

AC50 We further recommend that all of the other constituencies in the Essex sub-region remain as per the Commission's initial proposals.

Constituency names

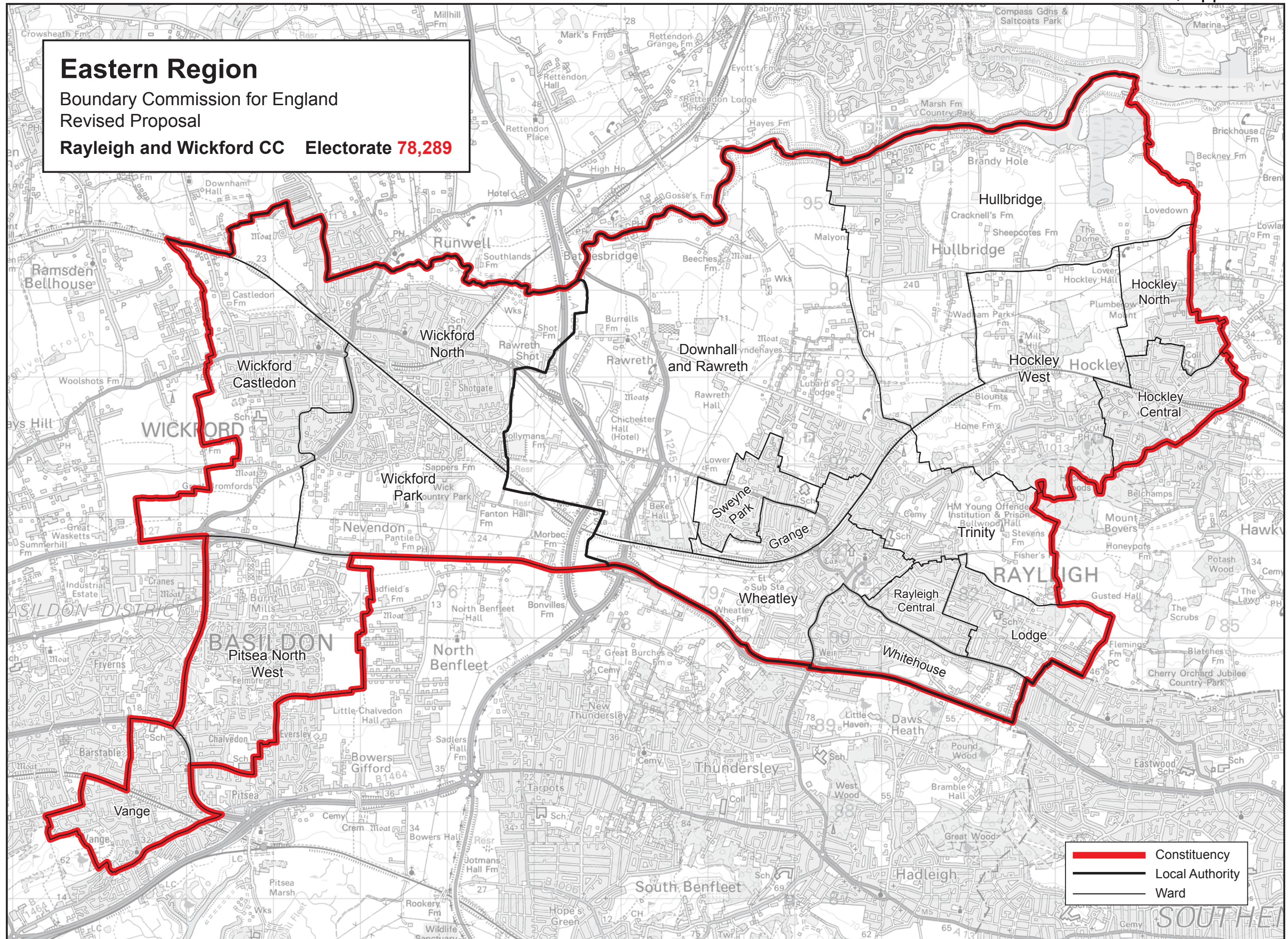
AC51 Finally, with regard to the Essex sub-region, we deal with representations to rename proposed constituencies. We have received many representations concerning North West Essex. The vast majority are in favour of reverting to the traditional and long-standing name of Saffron Walden. We see no reason why this constituency name should not be retained, and we therefore recommend that North West Essex be named Saffron Walden.

AC52 A number of members of the public and community organisations have made representations to us concerning the make-up of the Rochford and Southend East constituency. In light of these comments and the counter-proposals received, we have made a number of recommendations, not least the inclusion of the Milton and St Luke's wards from Southend West. It has been pointed out to us by several respondents that these proposed changes will mean that the majority of voters in this constituency will come from Southend wards. We have decided, therefore, to recommend that the constituency be renamed Southend East and Rochford in order to better reflect these changes.

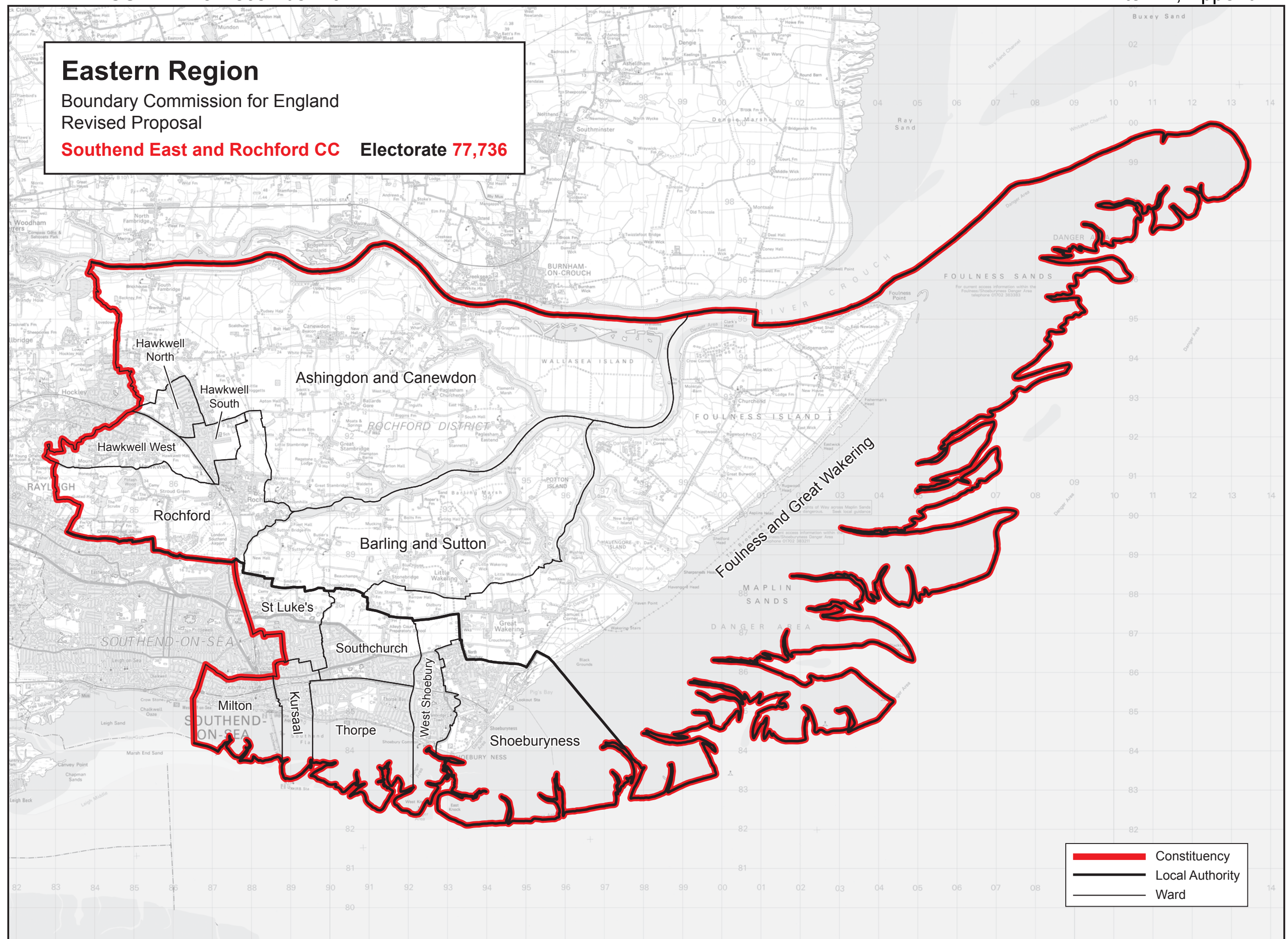
Eastern Region

Boundary Commission for England
Revised Proposal

Rayleigh and Wickford CC Electorate **78,289**



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