



REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

PROPOSED NEW PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

The Boundary Commission for England has published proposals for new Parliamentary Constituencies for Havering, two of which would be wholly within the borough, with a third partly covering Havering and parts of eastern Barking & Dagenham.

These proposals arise from the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which (among other things) reduced the number of Parliamentary Constituencies nationally from 650 (533 in England) to 600 (502), and sought more equally to distribute the number of voters across the new constituencies. The changes will take effect on and from the next Parliamentary General Election, which is due on 7 May 2015, following the enactment of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011.

Overall, the number of constituencies in Greater London is reduced by five. Under the proposals as published, Havering would retain two whole constituencies and part of a third but the boundaries would be different from those of the current constituencies.

The Commission proposes that the new constituencies would be:

Constituency (Electorate)	Comprising the following Wards
Hornchurch and Upminster (80,227)	Cranham, Elm Park; Hacton; Hylands; Rainham & Wennington; St Andrew's; South Hornchurch; and Upminster
Romford (80,166)	Emerson Park; Gooshays; Harold Wood; Havering Park; Heaton; Pettits; Romford Town; and Squirrels Heath
Dagenham North (74,095)	Brooklands and Mawneys (plus a number of Barking & Dagenham Wards)

The current electoral quota per constituency (the total electorate nationally, divided by constituencies) is 76,641. Every constituency – except two covering the Isle of Wight – must have a number of registered electors that is no more than 5% lower or higher than this figure. In practice, this means constituencies must contain between 72,810 and 80,473 electors.

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Of the current Havering constituencies, one (Hornchurch & Upminster) is within the quota while both Romford (73,123) and Dagenham & Rainham (74,021) have fewer electors than the lower limit of the quota.

In putting forward its proposals, the Commission acknowledged that to keep within the quota it had not been possible to keep constituencies within individual local authority areas, and it will be seen that the proposed Dagenham North constituency includes a number of wards from Barking & Dagenham together with Havering's Brooklands and Mawneys Wards. This contrasts with current constituencies where Dagenham & Rainham crosses the boundary of the two boroughs but includes different Havering Wards (Elm Park, Rainham & Wennington and South Hornchurch), which in the new arrangements would revert to being within a wholly Havering constituency.

The proposals were considered by the Governance Committee. The majority of Members of that Committee considered that it would be unnecessarily disruptive to make such major changes to the Borough's constituency boundaries when equally major changes had been made as recently as May 2010.

Moreover, Members felt it particularly inappropriate for a large part of the central Romford area (within Brooklands Ward), including such major local facilities as The Queens Hospital and Romford Greyhound Stadium, to be within a constituency known only as "Dagenham North".

The Committee agreed that the Council should be invited to agree to propose alternative arrangements to the Commission.

In the Committee's view, the preferable course would be for the existing constituencies to be retained but with the addition to the Romford Constituency of the Chadwell Heath ward of Barking & Dagenham (which is currently within the Dagenham & Rainham constituency). Chadwell Heath is part of the Romford postcode and post town and, indeed, is often thought – erroneously - to be part of Havering.

If the alternative constituencies proposed by the Committee were adopted, they would be:

Constituency (Electorate)	Comprising the following Wards
Hornchurch & Upminster (80,522)	Cranham, Emerson Park; Gooshays; Hacton; Harold Wood; Heaton; Hylands; St Andrew's; and Upminster
Romford (73,123 Havering; (6,717 Chadwell Heath Ward; Total: 79,840)	Brooklands; Mawneys; Havering Park; Pettits; Romford Town; and Squirrels Heath; plus Chadwell Heath Ward from Barking & Dagenham

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Dagenham & Rainham (29,436 Havering; 37,868 Barking & Dagenham; Total: 67,304)	Elm Park; Rainham & Wennington; and South Hornchurch (plus a number of Barking & Dagenham Wards other than Chadwell Heath)
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If this proposal were agreed, both the existing Hornchurch & Upminster and the proposed Romford (including Chadwell Heath) constituencies would be within the electoral quota. Dagenham & Rainham (excluding Chadwell Heath) would be significantly below quota – by more than 9,300 electors – and further adjustments in Barking & Dagenham and elsewhere would be necessary; that would of course be a matter for the Commission to resolve.

The Committee accordingly RECOMMENDS to the Council that the Boundary Commission for England be advised that, while the Council recognises the statutory requirement to balance electorates within the electoral quota, in its view the Commission is wrong to disregard both existing, strong local community ties and the fact that there was significant change to constituency boundaries as recently as May 2010; and accordingly the Council urges that:

- (a) The Hornchurch & Upminster constituency should retain its existing boundaries, on the grounds that it has an existing electorate within the electoral quota;**
- (b) The Romford Constituency should retain its existing boundaries within the borough and that the Chadwell Heath ward of the Borough of Baking & Dagenham should be added to it in order to achieve an electorate within the electoral quota, on the grounds that:**
 - i. the Brooklands ward contains a significant proportion of the Romford Town Centre area and it would be wholly inappropriate for such a significant area to be within a constituency known only as “Dagenham North”;**
 - ii. there are several major public facilities particularly associated with Romford in Brooklands Ward, such as The Queens Hospital and Romford Greyhound Stadium and it would be wholly inappropriate for such facilities to be within a “Dagenham North” constituency; and**
 - iii. Chadwell Heath is considered part of Romford for Post Office purposes and, indeed, is often thought erroneously to be part of Havering; and**
- (c) The Dagenham & Rainham Constituency should retain its existing boundaries, other than Chadwell Heath ward, and that further wards from Barking & Dagenham should be added to it (rather than Havering wards) in order to bring its electorate within the electoral quota.**