EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE STOKE-ON-TRENT (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2011

2011 No. [Draft]

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1. The draft Order provides for new district wards and numbers of district councillors for the district of Stoke-on-Trent at the district elections in 2011.

3. Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1. None.

4. Legislative context

4.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has power under section 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to make an order giving effect to recommendations contained in a report prepared, under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act, after conducting an electoral review. This instrument is being made to give effect to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's recommendations for new electoral arrangements set out in its report prepared following an electoral review of the district of Stoke-on-Trent.

4.2. This instrument is one of a group of eight similar ones laid before Parliament together. The others are the Bedford (Electoral Changes) Order 2011, the Central Bedfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2011, the Mansfield (Electoral Changes) Order 2011, the Northampton (Electoral Changes) Order 2011, the Sedgemoor (Electoral Changes) Order 2011, the South Derbyshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2011 and the West Somerset (Electoral Changes) Order 2011.

5. Territorial extent and application

5.1. This instrument applies to England.

6. European Convention on Human Rights

6.1. As the instrument is subject to the negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

7. Policy background

- What is being done and why

7.1. The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements including the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions for a specific local authority. The Boundary Committee for England began the electoral review of Stoke-on-Trent on 4 August 2009 following a direction given by the Electoral Commission. However, on 1st April 2010 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England was established under section 55 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. In accordance with the provisions of that Act the Commission assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee and took over the conduct of the electoral review.

7.2. An electoral review aims to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county or district councillor is as close to equal as possible, but the recommendations must also reflect community identities and interests and ensure that the wards or divisions allow for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission (and Committee before it) tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every ward or division it recommends varies by no more than 10% from the average, to ensure good levels of electoral equality, but is happy to show flexibility in varying by more than 10% from the average based on the evidence provided to it during the consultation stages of the review. Following a four-stage review process the Commission published its 'Final recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Stoke-on-Trent City Council'[1] on 26 October 2010.

7.3. The draft Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for the district of Stoke-on-Trent at the district elections in 2011 as recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The existing wards of the district will be replaced by 37 new ones. One ward will return three councillors, five wards will return two councillors and each of the other 31 wards will return one councillor. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England evaluated how many wards would have electoral variances of more than 10% to give an overall indication of how its recommendations would improve electoral equality across the authority. The number of electors represented by each councillor in 32 of the 37 new wards is not predicted to vary by more than 10% from the average across the district by 2015. The other five new wards are predicted to vary by more than 10% because sufficiently strong evidence of community identity had been received by the Commission to justify higher levels of electoral imbalance.

- Consolidation

7.4. The draft Order does not amend or revoke any legislation.

[1] www.lgbce.org.uk/__documents/lgbce-documents/draftfinal-reports-and-consultation-papers/2010/stoke-25-10-10.pdf

8. Consultation outcome

8.1. The draft Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the Boundary Committee for England's and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of electoral arrangements from August 2009 until October 2010. Three separate consultations were undertaken during the course of the review. There was an initial period of consultation on the most appropriate council size for the new authority followed later by a 12-week consultation on its wider electoral arrangements. Having considered the submissions received, the Boundary Committee for England published its 'Draft recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Stoke-on-Trent City Council'[2] on 26 March 2010. There was then a further 11-week consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England considered the further evidence received during consultation and published its final recommendations report on 26 October 2010.

8.2. During the course of the review, the Boundary Committee and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England received over 320 responses to their consultations. The consultations involved Stoke-on-Trent City Council, local MPs and other interested parties. The Boundary Committee for England considered that a council size of 44 would ensure effective and convenient local government for the district. On the basis of the submissions received and having visited the city, the Boundary Committee for England based its draft recommendations on the community evidence it received during the first consultation.

8.3. In response to consultation on the draft recommendations, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England decided to modify the draft recommendations in a number of areas, based on the evidence it had received during the consultation period. It also made a number of changes to the proposed ward names. Its final recommendations include a two-member Great Chell & Packmoor ward in place of two single-member wards, and amendments to the boundaries of Little Chell & Stanfield, Burslem Park, Burslem Central, Moorcroft, Ford Green & Smallthorne, Etruria & Hanley, Birches Head & Central Forest Park, Hartshill & Basford, Penkhull & Stoke, Blurton West & Newstead and Blurton East wards. These changes were based on the evidence received by the Commission during its consultation on the draft recommendations.

8.4. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England also noted the lack of consensus in the submissions received with regard to single- or multi-member wards. It noted that it had not received any evidence of how a uniform pattern of either single- or multi-member wards would ensure a good reflection of community identity in every ward of the city. Accordingly, the final recommendations are for a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards.

8.5. A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report 'Final recommendations – New electoral arrangements for Stoke-on-Trent City Council' which

[2] www.lgbce.org.uk/__documents/lgbce-documents/draftfinal-reports-and-consultation-papers/2010/stoke-draft-recommendations-report-final-web.pdf

is available at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/staffordshire/stoke-on-trent-electoral-review.

9. Guidance

9.1. The Commission does not intend to issue any guidance alongside this instrument. This is not considered necessary as the draft Order is self-explanatory and gives effect to recommendations following consultation with interested parties as to the changes to electoral arrangements.

9.2. Once the draft Order has been made, the Commission will publish a press release and distribute to local media advising that new electoral arrangements will be implemented at the next local elections. The press release will also direct interested parties to the Commission's website where the final recommendations will be available in detail.

10. Impact

10.1. No impact assessment has been prepared because no impact on the private sector or the voluntary sector is foreseen.

10.2. The impact on the public sector will be limited to the area for which the draft Order makes provision. The one-off cost of producing the map referred to by the instrument is to be funded by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The one-off cost of amending the electoral register to reflect the new district wards is to be funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

11. Regulating small business

11.1. The draft Order does not apply to small business.

12. Monitoring and review

12.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England will have no role in monitoring Stoke-on-Trent City Council's implementation of the Stoke-on-Trent (Electoral Changes) Order 2011. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

12.2. The Order will be reviewed insofar as the Commission continually monitors local authorities in England to identify any that meet its criteria for electoral reviews.

13. Contact

13.1. Marcus Bowell at the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Tel: 0207 664 8530 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can answer any queries regarding the instrument.