

Minutes of the meeting of the **ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 2 July 2015 at 9.02 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor P A Watkins

Councillors: S S Chandler  
M R Eddy  
S Hill  
F J W Scales

Officers: Head of Democratic Services  
Team Leader - Electoral and Land Charges  
Team Leader – Democratic Support

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P M Brivio.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor S Hill had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor P M Brivio.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW

The Head of Democratic Services introduced the report on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of Electoral Arrangements for Kent County Council.

The proposals were for an 81 member Kent County Council with an average electorate per councillor of 14,288 based on a predicted electorate of 1,157,343 for Kent by 2020. The proposals retained the existing number of County Divisions (7) for the Dover District and kept the two-member divisions for Deal Town and Dover Town. Overall, the proposals created 65 single-member divisions and 8 two-member divisions.

The new Deal Town Division had been expanded to include the area of Sholden Parish Council and the new Dover Town Division had been expanded to include the area of River Parish Council in order to maintain the principle of electoral equality.

The LGBCE proposals for the pattern of electoral divisions were based upon:

- Electoral equality of representation (i.e. the number of electors represented by each councillor)

- Community identity (that the electoral area reflects the interests and identity of local communities)
- Effective and convenient local government

The key factor was electoral equality as none of the proposed divisions could vary from the average number of electors per councillor by more than +/-10%. The proposed divisions had a variance of between +2% and -9% from the average.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that urban areas had been split into separate divisions in several districts and presented Members with options for replacing the proposed two-member divisions for Dover Town and Deal Town with single-member divisions that still fulfilled the conditions relating to electoral equality.

The options were as follows:

#### **Dover Town Division 1**

<b>District/Parish Area</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>
River (the area of River Civil Parish)	3305
St Radigund's Ward	4310
Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory Ward	5910
	13525

#### **Dover Town Division 2**

<b>District/Parish Area</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>
Tower Hamlets Ward	4290
Buckland Ward	5780
Town & Pier Ward	1800
Castle Ward	1760
	13630

#### **Deal Division 1**

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>	<b>Option B</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>
Middle Deal Ward	6810	Middle Deal Ward	6810
Mill Hill Ward	6610	North Deal Ward	6240
	13420		13050

#### **Deal Division 2**

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>	<b>Option B</b>	<b>Electorate 2020</b>
Walmer Ward	6950	Walmer Ward	6950
North Deal Ward	6240	Mill Hill Ward	6610
	13190		13560

The proposed single-member divisions all had an electoral equality variance of the same or smaller than the LGBCE draft recommendations (Dover Town -8% and Deal Town -7%).

The Committee was advised that the Head of Democratic Services' options for single-member divisions had the following benefits:

- That they would be in keeping with the original intention of Kent County Council to move to single-member divisions wherever it was practical;
- That it provided for improved electoral equality over the two-member division proposals;
- Were in keeping with single-member divisions in other urban areas;

- It would provide for time and cost benefits in administering the elections; and
- In terms of community identity, the Deal Division had previously been composed of Deal East and Deal West Divisions based on local topography and one of the proposed options would restore this arrangement.

Councillor M R Eddy stated that he believed that the retention of the two-member division for Deal Town was the most appropriate option as many of the issues affecting constituents were town-wide matters such as road access through Walmer. The introduction of a new two-member division for the Isle of Sheppey in the draft recommendations was cited as an example of the merit of using two-member divisions where it was appropriate to do so.

In contrast, Councillor P A Watkins advocated a return to the previous Deal East and Deal West Divisions divided by the rail line which from his personal experience as a former county councillor had worked effectively.

Councillor S S Chandler raised a question over a discrepancy between the narratives in the draft recommendations and the electoral area maps and requested that the Head of Democratic Services seek clarification.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

(a) That the proposed two-member Deal Town Division be split into two single-member divisions as follows:

- (i) Deal West Division (Middle Deal Ward and Mill Ward)
- (ii) Deal East Division (Walmer Ward and North Deal Ward)

On the grounds that it provided for greater electoral equality than the draft recommendations, was consistent with urban areas in other districts and achieved the original intention of single-member divisions where practical while still providing a strong community identity with a clearly identifiable boundary (the railway line).

(b) That the proposed two-member Dover Town Division be split into two single-member divisions as follows:

- (i) Dover Urban West (River Civil Parish, St Radigund's Ward and Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory Ward)
- (ii) Dover Urban East (Tower Hamlets Ward, Buckland Ward, Town and Pier Ward and Castle Ward)

On the grounds that it provided for greater electoral equality than the draft recommendations, was consistent with urban areas in other districts and achieved the original intention of single-member divisions where practical while still providing for divisions with a strong community identity.

(c) That the Head of Democratic Services review the online draft recommendations and advise the Local Government Boundary Commission for England of any discrepancy between the narrative and the electoral area maps if necessary.

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report on the Dover District Council Electoral Arrangements.

The Committee was advised that as at July 2015 the Town and Pier Ward had a variance in excess of 30% from the current average electorate for the district and therefore potentially met the criteria for triggering a periodic electoral review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. In light of this, Members were asked to consider whether there was merit in the Council seeking to initiate a review of its electoral arrangements, including the matter of the number of elected members, as a consequence and given that the last review had occurred over a decade ago.

In addition, the possibility of the electoral imbalance falling below the 30% variance trigger point following the annual canvass for the register of electors and the publication of the revised register on 1 December 2015 was raised.

The Committee requested further information over the timetable for a review of the Council's electoral arrangements, including looking at the feasibility of undertaking a Community Governance Review in respect of the town and parish councils, before it made any recommendations to the Council.

Members were advised that although the LGBCE was responsible for reviewing Dover District Council's electoral arrangements, the Council was itself responsible for undertaking a Community Governance Review of the town and parish councils.

RESOLVED: That the Head of Democratic Services be requested to develop a report on the implications of conducting a review of the Council's electoral arrangements, including a time line for the process and a Community Governance Review.

The meeting ended at 9.41 am.