
Subject: **WARD PATTERN SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

Meeting and Date: **Electoral Matters Committee – 1 March 2018**
Extraordinary Council – 14 March 2018

Report of: **Chief Executive**

Classification: **UNRESTRICTED**

Purpose of the report: To propose a pattern of wards as part of the Electoral Review of Dover District Council for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Recommendation: Electoral Matters Committee:
(a) To consider the proposed ward patterns and make recommendations to Council.
Extraordinary Council:
(a) To authorise the Chief Executive to make a submission on ward patterns on behalf of the Council.

1. **Summary**

This report sets out the Council's proposed submission on ward patterns. This proposal will also inform any political groups and individual councillors who may wish to make their own submissions and considerations of possible ward pattern options.

2. **Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 The Council at its meeting held on 6 December 2017 authorised the Chief Executive to make a submission on a future council size of 32 councillors to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The LGBCE announced on 30 January 2018 that it was minded to make a recommendation of a future council size of 32 councillors.
- 2.2 As part of the next process of the Electoral Review, the LGBCE is now consulting on ward patterns for a council size of 32 councillors.

Ward Patterns

- 2.3 In designing a pattern of electoral wards the Council has been mindful that the Commission must balance its three statutory criteria and has tried to create wards accordingly. The three main elements of the criteria are as follows:

- **Delivering Electoral Equality for Local Voters** – Ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of each vote is the same regardless of where a voter within the district lives.

Based on the forecast electorate figures for 2023 published by the LGBCE, this would equate to 2,902 electors per councillor.

- **Interests and Identities of Local Communities** – Establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.

The Council has considered physical barriers marking the boundary between different communities such as major roads, rivers or railway lines. It has also considered the placement of public facilities where appropriate.

- **Effective and Convenient Local Government** – Ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole, including both the council size decision and the warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

In creating the new ward patterns consideration has been given to several factors including:

- *the geographic size of each proposed ward;*
- *levels of deprivation of each proposed ward;*
- *the additional workload that each proposed ward might generate through matters such as attending parish council meetings.*

Electoral Forecasting

- 2.4 As part of the electoral review process the LGBCE requires the Council provide the current electorate for 2017 and produce a six-year forecast for the electorate to 2023. The methodology for these forecasts is set out in detail in guidance 'Electorate Forecasts – A Guide for Practitioners' produced by the LGBCE. A number of factors need to be considered when producing these forecasts, including migration in/out of and within the district, demographic change, household sizes, the location and scale of new developments, household occupancy levels and the degree to which these changes in population are reflected in local electorate levels.
- 2.5 This information was gathered from a number of sources including the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for higher level population forecasts and the Council's Regeneration Delivery team for forecasts of housing growth based on sites with planning permission and those allocated within the Local Plan. Overall, a cautious approach to forecasting development has been adopted in an attempt to avoid unrealistic forecasts that could result in significant electoral imbalances being created over time.
- 2.6 As at 1 December 2017, the electorate was 87,130 with an estimated electorate of 92,879 by 2023. This electoral growth is not forecast to be consistent across the whole district and some areas are forecast to remain static or slightly decline reflecting demographic and other factors. As part of the forecasting methodology consideration was given to the previous six years and whether changes to the electorate at a polling district level could be attributed to housing growth or demographic change. The main areas of forecast housing growth are Aylesham and Whitfield, reflecting the projected housing development in each of these areas over the next six years.
- 2.7 In designing a pattern of wards, the forecast electorate for 2023 has been used for the purposes of achieving electoral equality. However, secondary consideration has also been given to the 2017 electorate figures in order to avoid the creation of short term areas of electoral inequality wherever possible.

2.8 The target average electorate per councillor for 2023 based on the published current and forecast electorate is as follows:

Year	1 Member Ward	2 Member Ward	3 Member Ward
2023	2,902	5,805	8,707
2017	2,723	5,446	8,168

2.9 The LGBCE recognises that perfect electoral equality is unlikely to be obtained for every ward and therefore will accept variances (as a general guide usually variances of +/- 10% at most) although the larger the proposed variance the more persuasive the evidence provided to justify must be.

2.10 The electorate figures used in designing the pattern of wards that are proposed in this submission is based on the 'electorate forecast' published on the LGBCE website.

2.11 In addition, during the preparation of this submission officers have been mindful of any potential 'windfall' developments (i.e. unforeseen developments) which would need to be factored into the forecast electorate figures.

2.12 In conclusion, while electoral forecasting is, in the words of the LGBCE, an 'inexact science' every effort has been undertaken to ensure that the forecasting is as reliable as it is possible to be.

Warding Pattern and Local Communities

2.13 The warding pattern is based on a council size of 32 members with each councillor representing an average of 2,902 electors. The proposed warding pattern is for 17 new wards, a reduction from the current 21 wards, one ward has remained unchanged.

2.14 In designing a ward pattern the case for all single member wards against a mix of multi-member wards was given consideration but ultimately rejected in favour of the best numerical solution on the grounds of electoral equality.

	Single Member Wards	Multi-Member Wards
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers direct accountability to constituents with a single point of contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater resilience in the case of a member being unavailable • Able to share workloads with other ward members • Allow members to support and mentor new members in the ward
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little resilience in the circumstances of a member being unavailable (i.e. through absence or conflict of interest) • Unable to share workload with other ward members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-known dominant member may draw workload away from other members preventing them from gaining experience at all aspects of ward work

- 2.15 In developing the proposed ward pattern officers have been able to draw on natural geographic, infrastructure and community features which have created logical boundaries.

Ward Naming

- 2.16 The guidance provided by the LGBCE¹ sets out its approach to the naming of wards. It recommends that where wards remain largely unchanged the existing name should be retained unless a good reason is provided to justify the change.
- 2.17 In designing the pattern of wards consideration has been given to ward names that reflect continuity of community identification in respect of the proposed wards as well as other factors such as parish/village names, local community landmarks and smaller area names. The Council has also given consideration to whether existing ward names are still relevant where community identities may have changed over time. The rationale for each name chosen has been set out in Appendix 1.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1: To authorise the Chief Executive to make the ward pattern submission attached at Appendix 1 on behalf of the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of the review of the electoral arrangements for the Dover District.
- 3.2 Option 2: To authorise the Chief Executive to make a different ward pattern submission on behalf of the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of the review of the electoral arrangements for the Dover District.

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 In considering the proposed ward patterns it is to be noted that there are a number of alternative models that could have been proposed that were rejected on the grounds of not providing the best fit to the three statutory criteria. In particular, Deal and Dover when viewed as a blank sheet without consideration of the current wards would allow for a significant number of different configurations. The options set out in this report, where possible, have tried to remain broadly consistent with the existing polling districts.
- 4.2 The aim of this report has been to produce an evidence based ward pattern submission for the Council to submit to the LGBCE. The report will also help inform members as to possible alternative options for ward patterns that they may wish to submit as political groups or as individual members.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no resource implications arising from this stage in the Electoral Review process.

¹ Electoral Reviews – Technical Guidance, April 2014, Local Government Boundary Commission for England

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Ward Patterns

Appendix 2 –

7. **Background Papers**

Dover Electoral Review Website, <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/kent/dover> , Local Government Boundary Commission for England

'How to propose a pattern of wards', Local Government Boundary Commission for England

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