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

Meeting and Date: **EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL – 28 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: 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 A report was submitted to the Electoral Matters Committee meeting held on 1 March 2018 with initial proposals developed by officers. The Electoral Matters Committee resolved that officers develop revised proposals in a number of areas, most notable for urban Dover and Deal (with Walmer and Kingsdown).

Ward Patterns

2.3 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.

2.4 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 a targeted average electorate of 2,902 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

- 2.5 As part of the electoral review process the LGBCE required the Council to provide ti with the electorate for December 2017 and produce a six-year forecast for the electorate to 2023. This was adopted by the LGBCE and helps inform the current consultation.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.

2.10 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

2.11 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.

2.12 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.

2.13 In addition, during the preparation of this submission officers have been mindful of any potential 'windfall' developments (i.e. unforeseen developments).

2.14 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

2.15 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 16 new wards, a reduction from the current 21 wards. The proposals only contain one ward (Little Stour and Ashstone) that has remained unchanged in the areas it represents.

2.16 In designing a ward pattern the case for all single member wards was considered against a mix of multi-member wards. An all single member ward pattern was ultimately rejected in favour of the best numerical solution on the grounds of electoral equality and community identity.

	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 	<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

	with other ward members	
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- 2.17 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

- 2.18 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.
- 2.19 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, including the initial proposals considered by the Electoral Matters Committee. 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.
- 4.2 The proposed ward patterns achieve the three principles of electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government as follows:
- 4.3 Electoral Equality – All of the 16 wards under the new proposed ward patterns achieve an electoral variance of less than 10% in 2023 and 75% of the proposed wards have an electoral variance smaller than 5% in 2023. The Electoral Variance for the December 2017 electorate figures provides for an electoral variance of less than 10% in the case of all but 3 wards (Maxton, Elms Vale & Tower Hamlets, River and Sandwich) and in all 3 cases it is forecast that this variance will correct to within 10% by 2023.
- 4.4 Community Identity – In the rural areas, the distribution of electors has meant that the new proposed rural wards are larger than the previous rural wards. The creation of the new rural parishes has where possible been based on the existing parish

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

boundaries with changes kept to a minimum. In the case of two parishes (Eythorne and Kingsdown-with-Ringwould) these proposals call for the creation of new internal warding arrangements to accommodate the splitting of the existing parish area between two district wards. In urban Dover, the changes made following the Electoral Matters Committee have been based around the creation of a new town centre ward in Dover, keeping as much of the Folkestone Road as possible in a single ward and the constraints of Dover's topography. The changes to Deal following the Electoral Matters Committee were more far reaching with the inclusion of Kingsdown and Sholden in the proposed ward patterns. This has been based on the linkages between (a) south Sholden and north Deal and (b) Walmer with Kingsdown.

- 4.5 Effective and Convenient Local Government – In terms of size the new rural wards are of a similar geographic size or smaller to the current Little Stour and Ashstone Ward. As the larger rural wards are 2 member wards it provides for resilience in the ward members covering 5 or 6 parish councils within the area of the ward. The proposed urban wards provide for good internal road linkages and reasonable ward sizes.
- 4.6 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.

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Revised Proposed Ward Patterns

7. **Background Papers**

- Electoral Matters Committee, 1 March 2018 (initial officer proposals) - <http://moderngov.dover.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=2901>
- 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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