

## **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTORAL DIVISION REVIEW**

### **Legal & Democratic Advisory Committee – 2 July 2015**

Report of	Chief Officer Legal and Governance
Status:	For Consideration
Also considered by:	Governance Committee – 13 July 2015 Council – 21 July 2015
Key Decision:	No
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr. Firth
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	Christine Nuttall Ext. 7245

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#### **Recommendation to Legal & Democratic Advisory Committee :**

That views on the proposed changes to the KCC electoral division arrangements be given to the Portfolio Holder for any Portfolio Response

#### **Recommendation to Governance Committee:**

That the Committee advises full Council of its views on the proposed changes to the KCC electoral division arrangements

#### **Recommendation to Council:**

That a response be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in relation to the proposed changes to the KCC electoral division arrangements in accordance with Members' views.

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**Reason for recommendation: Response to consultation document issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England relating to proposed changes to the KCC electoral division arrangements.**

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#### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 On the 12 May the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) issued a consultation document on its draft proposals for new county council division boundaries for Kent County Council (KCC). The review is being conducted as KCC currently has high levels of electoral inequality where some councillors represent many more or many fewer voters than others.

- 2 Copies of the News Release, consultation document and consultation map are attached at Appendices A, B and C respectively. The consultation map is not easy to use for detailed analysis of the proposals but a very good interactive map can be found by following the web-link contained in the News Release:  
(<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/4285>)
- 3 The interactive map can be zoomed and various layers such as current and proposed boundaries can be turned on or off.

### **Consultation Timetable**

- 4 The consultation period ends on 6 July (an eight-week period). Unfortunately this will not allow time for a formal response from this Council without special meetings of Governance Committee and Full Council being called. The Chief Executive has written to the LGBCE setting out this problem and in particular the impact of the consultation period being set so close to the local elections.
- 5 The LGBCE have agreed to an extension to the 22<sup>nd</sup> July (the day after full Council) on the basis that a draft of what will be considered by Council will be sent to them by 6<sup>th</sup> July, and that they are notified on 22<sup>nd</sup> July of any changes agreed at Council. This can be achieved by the Portfolio Holder passing to them any comments agreed at the Legal & Democratic Advisory Committee.

### **Summary of the Review**

- 6 The aims of the review are to:
  - Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
  - Reflect community identity
  - Provide for effective and convenient local government
- 7 The Commission is looking for responses to the following questions:
  - Do the proposed electoral divisions reflect local communities?
  - Can the proposals be improved whilst maintaining electoral equality?
  - Are the names of the proposed divisions right?
- 8 The proposals are to reduce the current number of members of KCC from 84 to 81, a reduction of three. The three District Councils in Kent, each having a reduction of one in the number of KCC members are Canterbury, Thanet and this Council – Sevenoaks. A table setting out the relevant figures for each Kent District is attached at Appendix D.
- 9 It is clear from the document that electoral equality is the overriding requirement and the figures in Appendix D indicate that the reduction for the Sevenoaks District brings it much more into line with the others across Kent.

### **Mechanics of the Review**

- 10 KCC division boundaries are required to align with Parish Ward (and hence with District Council) boundaries. If a proposal includes the splitting of an existing

Parish Ward this must be done alongside the creation of new Parish Wards. There are no such proposals in the Sevenoaks District area.

- 11 The proposals are based on estimated number of electors in 2020 – the projections were developed through an analytical model used by KCC’s Business Intelligence Team, taking into account planned developments and demographic predictions. The estimated total of electors across the KCC area in 2020 is 1,157,343. This equates to an average number of electors per councillor of **14,288** for 81 members in total. It is this figure that any division proposal must look to in order to achieve consistent electoral equality.

**Detail for Sevenoaks District**

- 12 Appendices E and F are tables setting out the detail, by Parish, of the current and proposed KCC Divisions respectively. Under the current arrangements both the Sevenoaks Town Council area and the Swanley Town Council area are split between KCC Divisions. The proposals consolidate the whole of Swanley (together with the Parish of Hextable) into one KCC Division, but still split the Sevenoaks Town area into two parts combining each with a number of the more rural areas adjacent to them.
- 13 The proposed split of Sevenoaks includes the Kippington and Northern Wards of the Town Council from the Eastern, St Johns, Town and Wildernesse wards. This essentially splits the town along the main road from the South, from Riverhill to Solefields, and along the line of the railway line out of the tunnel, through the main Sevenoaks station and along the line towards Bat & Ball station then following the A25 to the East.
- 14 The main changes are as follows:
- Swanley Town Christchurch and Swanley Village wards move from the current “Darent Valley” division to the new “Swanley” division
  - Dunton Green, Knockholt and Halstead move from the current “Sevenoaks West” division to the new “Darent Valley” division
  - Otford moves from the current “Sevenoaks East” division to the new “Darent Valley” division
  - The Sevenoaks Town Northern ward moves from the current “Sevenoaks East” division to the new “Sevenoaks West” division
  - Westerham Town moves from the current “Sevenoaks West” division to the new “Sevenoaks Rural” division.
- 15 The proposed division names are as follows:

<b>Current Division</b>	<b>Proposed Division</b>
Darent Valley	Darent Valley
Sevenoaks Central	

Sevenoaks East	Sevenoaks East
Sevenoaks West	Sevenoaks West
Sevenoaks North East	Sevenoaks North East
Sevenoaks South	Sevenoaks Rural
Swanley	Swanley

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

None – consultation on proposals for KCC Divisions only

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None – consultation on proposals for KCC Divisions only

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **Conclusions**

Members' views are sought on the proposals, to be sent as a response from the Portfolio Holder, or from the Council

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – LGBCE News Release 12 May 2015

Appendix B – Draft Recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Kent County Council

Appendix C – Electoral Review of Kent Consultation Map

Appendix D – Kent Districts Analysis

Appendix E – KCC Review – Current Division Analysis

Appendix F – KCC Review – Proposed Division Analysis

## **Background Papers:**

See Appendices to Report.

**Christine Nuttall**  
**Chief Officer for Legal and Governance**