

**Local Government Boundary Review – New Ward Boundary
Principles**

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O’Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the principles on which the new ward boundaries scheme will be put together for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) as part of Maidstone’s Local Government Boundary Review (LGBR).

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:

That the principles set out in paragraph 2.4 be agreed.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee (Principles)	16 February 2022
Democracy and General Purposes Committee (Recommended Submission)	9 March 2022
Council (Final Submission)	13 April 2022

Local Government Boundary Review – New Ward Boundary Principles

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Whilst the Local Government Boundary Review doesn't directly contribute to the council's corporate priorities, it does contribute to all of them indirectly by ensuring that the council's wards and electoral arrangements are fit for purpose and provide for electoral equality as well as achieving the statutory objectives of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral Equality • Community Identity • Effective and Convenient Local Government 	<p>Democratic and Electoral Services Manager</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>See impact on corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Democratic and Electoral Services Manager</p>

Risk Management	The LGBR is run the by the LGBCE and the Council's role is to provide a submission to the consultation that meets the LGBCE's statutory objectives and makes the most convincing case for a warding scheme that benefits Maidstone. The primary risk in this work is that Council submits a proposal that is not fit for purpose. The principles and process set out manage that risk.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	The staffing from this project is provided from existing staffing drawn from several teams. There is no financial impact to this, but it represents an opportunity cost as the staff spend their time on this project. The limited timescales for the project mean that this is manageable.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	The review is being conducted by the LGBCE under its powers in The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.	Legal Team
Privacy and Data Protection	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	Achieving electoral equality is one of the statutory objectives of the Local Government Boundary Review.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Public Health	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report builds on the report brought to the Committee in January 2022 setting out the approach to producing a warding scheme submission to the LGBCE.
- 2.2 Due to the intense period of work and short timescales officers are working and will continue to work on possible boundary proposals between now and submission to the Committee on 9 March 2022. This work includes Member involvement and in order to present something for Members to work with at the first Member workshop a set of principles have been agreed that officers are currently working to. These principles have been discussed with the LGBCE.
- 2.3 Although officers have, through necessity, already begun working up boundaries on the basis of these principles, the Committee are asked to consider them for two reasons. Firstly, to inform Members of the approach the LGBCE will expect any submission to take and enable Members to come to the workshops with an understanding of what is required, and secondly Members are asked to agree the principles in case there are changes or additional principles they would like to see applied. With the pace of work required to achieve a sound submission any changes can quickly be incorporated into proposals for the first Member workshop on 18 February 2022.
- 2.4 The principles that Members are asked to agree (and officers are currently working to) are:
1. There are no restrictions on combinations of 1, 2, or 3 Member wards and the projected electorate figures for 2027 are to be used.
 2. **Blank sheet of paper** - there are no protections for existing wards and decisions will be based on the three LGBCE objectives, not on existing ward boundaries. The objectives are:
 - i. Electorate equality for voters,
 - ii. Community identities and interests, and
 - iii. Effective and convenient local government
 3. We will combine parishes in different combinations to now where it helps to achieve the three objectives.
 4. We will consider the urban area as one set of wards, and the rural area as another set of wards, whilst being aware of the overall impact on the borough as a complete scheme of wards.

5. We will make boundary adjustments for the urban area and its growth over the last 21 years and projected growth to 2027 (managing so called development 'overspill').
 6. This could split parishes across wards – the LGBCE would create parish wards in those instances and these would be reviewed in 2023 as part of the community governance review.
 7. In the urban area, without parish building blocks, we will look for physical boundaries to guide decisions on wards.
 8. We recognise that urban and rural, and parished and non-parished are not the same and that this could present particular challenges in certain areas.
- 2.5 The LGBCE recommend starting from a blank borough map, and using clear and obvious physical boundaries and parishes as building blocks. For Maidstone, due to the clear urban/rural split, it is appropriate to use the defined urban boundary (defined through the Local Plan Review) as a boundary too. Using this approach produces a starting map with the rural areas with parishes on one side and the urban area divided into two as shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.6 From that base position proportions of the electorate and the ratio of required councillors provide a good starting point to draw boundaries from. Officers have several workshops in the w/c 7 February 2022 that will allow options to be considered and presented to Members.

Member Engagement

- 2.7 The following formal Member Engagement is planned:

Three workshops have been arranged with councillors. These are on:

- 18 February 2022 – During the day, all day. This will be split into discreet sessions (am and pm) for different groups of councillors to drop into – virtual only
- 22 February 2022 – evening (6.30pm) – virtual and physical (preferred)
- 28 February 2022 – evening (6.30pm) – virtual and physical (preferred)

Officers will have prepared scenarios so that councillors have a starting point to comment and work from. Those scenarios will be based on the agreed principles.

- 2.8 Informal Member Engagement

- Officers may contact Ward Members during the day (or evening) where they are working on a particular area that requires changes and a local councillor view would be beneficial.

- If required we may have project sessions on particular areas and invite a councillor(s) to attend. This is likely to be very rare, but if there are particularly difficult boundaries to resolve we may need to do this.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 - That the principles set out in 2.4 be agreed.
 - 3.2 Option 2 - That the principles set out in 2.4 be amended and then agreed.
 - 3.3 Option 3 - That the Committee reject the principles in 2.4 and come up with an entirely different set of principles (not recommended).
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1, that the principles set out in 2.4 be agreed, is the preferred option. Though the feedback and views of Members are welcomed and option 2 would be appropriate where further principles are identified that meet the requirements of a submission to the LGBCE.
 - 4.2 This is the preferred option as the principles are drawn from LGBCE guidance, presentations and discussions, and will both enable the work to be progressed and to produce a submission to the commission that is likely to carry significant weight.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The LGBR is run the by the LGBCE and the Council's role is to provide a submission to the consultation that meets the LGBCE's statutory objectives and makes the most convincing case for a warding scheme that benefits Maidstone. The primary risk in this work is that Council submits a proposal that is not fit for purpose. The principles and process set out manage that risk.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Regular reports on the LGBR have been presented to the committee throughout this municipal year. The last such report was presented to committee on 26 January 2022.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 The principles are being applied to the warding scenarios being developed. The process includes member involvement as set out in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8.

7.2 The decision making will be as follows:

- Democracy and General Purposes on 9 March 2022 will make the recommendation to Council
- Council on 13 April 2022 will be the ultimate decision maker.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Base Ward Boundary Review Map

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None