

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 27 July 2021
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore (Vice-Chairman), Cooke, Cooper, English, Hastie, Perry, Purle (Chairman), M Rose and R Webb

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 30 June 2021 1 - 4
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
10. Question and Answer Session for Members of the Public
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
12. Committee Work Programme 5
13. Reports of Outside Bodies
14. Member Agenda Item Request - Full Council Meeting Arrangements
15. Workforce Strategy Update Report 6 - 19

Issued on Monday 19 July 2021

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

16. Honorary Alderman - Exceptional Award of Status	20 - 24
17. Local Government Boundary Review - Council Size Submission	25 - 47
18. Parliamentary Constituencies - Boundary Commission for England Consultation	48 - 60

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

In order to ask a question at this meeting, either remotely or in person, please call **01622 602899** or email **committee@maidstone.gov.uk** by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 23 July 2021). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email **committee@maidstone.gov.uk** by 5p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5p.m. on Friday 23 July 2021). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 2021

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Cooke, Cooper, English, Hastie, Perry, Purle (Chairman), M Rose and R Webb

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

3. **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Purle be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

4. **ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs Blackmore be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

6. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no Visiting Members.

Note: Councillor Hastie joined the meeting at 6.34pm during this item.

7. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

8. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

9. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 10 MARCH 2021 AND 31 MARCH 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 10 March 2021 and 31 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

11. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

12. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

13. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

14. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance highlighted that the Review of Church Road, Otham had been rescheduled to November, due to resources being directed towards the governance review.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager proposed that, subject to the approval of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, two additional items would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee: Posthumous Award of Honorary Alderman Status and Parliamentary Constituency Changes (the Boundary Commission for England).

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

15. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

16. APPOINTMENT TO SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS

A nomination form had been received from Councillor English to be appointed to South East Employers. Councillor Cooke requested to be appointed to the outside body and outlined previous experience relevant to the role.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Clive English and Councillor Gary Cooke be appointed as representatives to South East Employers.

17. GOVERNANCE REVIEW: CHANGING TO AN EXECUTIVE MODEL

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance introduced the report which was brought to the Committee following the motion to review governance arrangements approved at the Annual Council Meeting. When reviewed previously, a working group was formed to develop the new

arrangements and this was the preferred option for the current review as it offered more flexibility to meet more often. It was explained that extra resource may be required to support with the development of a new Constitution, and for support from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. If the Committee agreed that extra resource would be required, this would need to be approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee discussed option 2, the formation of a working group, as the preferred route to developing the new governance arrangements, with regular progress reports presented back to the Committee. It was felt that all Members should be invited to take part in the working group meetings in order to enhance collaboration, but that a core membership should be appointed from the Committee.

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance informed the Committee that all-Member workshops had previously taken place to ensure every Member had opportunities to input, which could be arranged for the current review.

RESOLVED: That a working group be formed to develop the new executive arrangements, appointed from Committee Members, and to include the Chairman, two further Members from the Conservative Group, one Member from the Liberal Democrat Group and one Member from the Labour Group.

18. WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS - CONSULTATION STAGE APPROVAL

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the report, highlighting the amendments since it was presented to the Committee in January 2021. The financial considerations had changed due to the election cycles changing, and reference was made to the statement on 10 June 2021 to the House of Commons outlining the Government's preference for whole council elections. At least one whole council election would take place due to the local government boundary review, which would be in 2024.

In response to questions, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that whole council elections would be synchronised with Parish Council elections, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections would also fall into the same cycle.

RESOLVED: That

1. The medium consultation option, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be undertaken; and
2. The outcome of the consultation be reported back to the Committee in September 2021 for a recommendation to be made to Council in September 2021.

19. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS FOR MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AT COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the report, explaining that option 3(i) would be preferable from a service delivery perspective due to the impact on resources of the major projects being undertaken within the team.

RESOLVED: That option 3(i) of the report, to maintain the status quo, be agreed, but that Member feedback on this issue be taken by officers as part of the development of the new Constitution.

20. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 7.29pm.

2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Governance Review: Executive Model	D&GP	08-Sep-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
LGBR Size Recommendations	D&GP	08-Sep-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Ryan O'Connell
Whole Council Elections: Consultation Outcome (if required)	D&GP	08-Sep-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Ryan O'Connell
LGBR First Draft of Submission	D&GP	13-Oct-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Ryan O'Connell
Governance Review Working Group Update	D&GP	10-Nov-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
Review of Church Road Decision	D&GP	10-Nov-21	Committee Request		Alison Broom	Angela Woodhouse
 LGBR Final Submission	D&GP	10-Nov-21	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Ryan O'Connell
Governance Review Working Group Update	D&GP	26-Jan-22	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
LGBR Boundary Work	D&GP	26-Jan-22	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Ryan O'Connell
Pay Policy Update	D&GP	26-Jan-22	Officer Update		Bal Sandher	Bal Sandher
Governance Review Working Group Update	D&GP	16-Feb-22	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
Revised Constitution	D&GP	09-Mar-22	Officer Update		Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse

Agenda Item 15

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

27 July 2021

Workforce Strategy Update Report

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Stephen McGinnes, MKS Director
Lead Officer and Report Author	Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services
Classification	Public
Wards affected	No wards

Executive Summary

The Council has had a Workforce Strategy since 2008 and this has been reviewed and developed as the priorities and environment have changed. As part of the approval the P&R Committee requested that the Employment Committee should receive progress updates twice per year. Following the Committee Structure Review undertaken by the Democracy Committee in the 2018/19 municipal year, the functions of the Employment Committee now fall under the Democracy and General Purposes Committee.

At Appendix 1 the report sets out the progress made against the action plan that supports the Workforce Strategy.

Purpose of Report

The report is for noting.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the progress of the actions set out in the Workforce Strategy be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	27 July 2021

Workforce Strategy Update Report

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all aspects of the corporate priorities.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Cross Cutting Objectives	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all objectives.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Risk Management	The overarching risk is that if the council does not have a Workforce Strategy it may fail to put in place the appropriate resources to implement actions to deliver the priorities and outcomes for delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Financial	Workforce costs are the single biggest area of expenditure for the Council, accounting for around half of the Council's total budget. The Workforce Strategy therefore has a financial impact, but this is costed within the normal annual budget. Specific initiatives described within this report are also funded from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Workforce Strategy will have an impact on staff – this should be a positive impact as we work to ensure that there are improvements.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Legal	Although there may be specific actions arising out of the Strategy that require legal input, there is nothing identified in the plan overall that will have legal implications.	Corporate Governance, MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	No personal data is contained in the report.	Corporate Governance, MKLS
Equalities	No impact identified because of this update report. As an employer the Council has a duty to fulfil under the Equality Act 2010. This is ongoing and is embedded in the processes to deliver the Work Force Strategy	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Procurement	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR

Biodiversity and Climate Change	<p>The work to address the culture change programme will support the action 9.1 of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan:</p> <p>Provide briefings and training for Councillors and Officers on climate change and biodiversity to create a culture change and ensure climate change and biodiversity are integrated into decision making.</p>	Transformation Team Leader
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The current key themes of the Workforce Strategy are:

- Organisation culture and change;
- Resourcing;
- Development, and
- Reward.

There has been progress against all the themes, much of which is cross cutting and affects more than one theme.

2.2 Organisation culture and change

2.2.1 The outbreak of Covid-19 has required the council to review the way we work and deliver our services. Our recent experience of staff working more flexibly has demonstrated the opportunities this has created for services and staff. In order to build on these opportunities for greater flexibility, we have developed guidance for managers by providing a framework that has expanded the number of options to work more flexibly for staff across the council as well as ensuring services are being delivered to our customers in a productive, efficient and responsive way.

2.2.2 The changing working practices caused by Covid-19 has also required the council to consider the workforce culture for the future. The council wants to ensure that the organisational culture has the capacity to deliver high performing services through effective Leadership & Management and to embrace innovation/creativity as well as new ways of working. The work we have started in creating a more agile way of working will also require identifying a culture change programme to support the new ways of working project.

The outcome of this project will help the council to achieve the following:

- A leadership culture that aligns with the Council's vision and values - improved level of trust and transparency at leadership levels by encouraging and creating trust-related behaviours for all management/supervisor roles. Realistic workload expectations will need to be established to ensure staff remain productive to meet the objectives of the council.

- Culture that values creativity and innovation - employees having clear understanding and opportunities are created for creativity and innovation, while providing sufficient time to complete work duties.
- Make decisions at the appropriate level - employees having a clear understanding of decisions that fall within the boundaries of their roles in order to empower staff and increase efficiency.
- Culture that accepts reasonable risk-taking - create autonomy within boundaries based upon level of risk, allowing employees to make decisions and take responsibility.
- Leadership behaviours/competencies align with the desired culture - managers skills are developed through training to demonstrate the desired values, behaviour and competencies that meet the culture of the organisation.
- Employees have the right blend of skills and knowledge - employees are developed to undertake their current role to a high standard in order to respond to future business needs. Managers possess the core skills to be effective managers and leaders are exposed to cutting edge thinking and have the skills, behaviours and capacity to lead the organisation through change.

2.2.3 As part of improving our engagement strategy with staff, we have introduced a new engagement group made up from staff across the council to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns to understand what they would like to see as part of the engagement agenda.

The aims and objectives of the Engagement Group is to:

- provide opportunities for the group to set the 'agenda' for engagement moving forward
- listen, understand and implement their ideas and concerns to ensure that people feel valued and are 'part' of the Council
- have the voice of the Engagement Group heard by taking part at Wider Leadership Team meetings

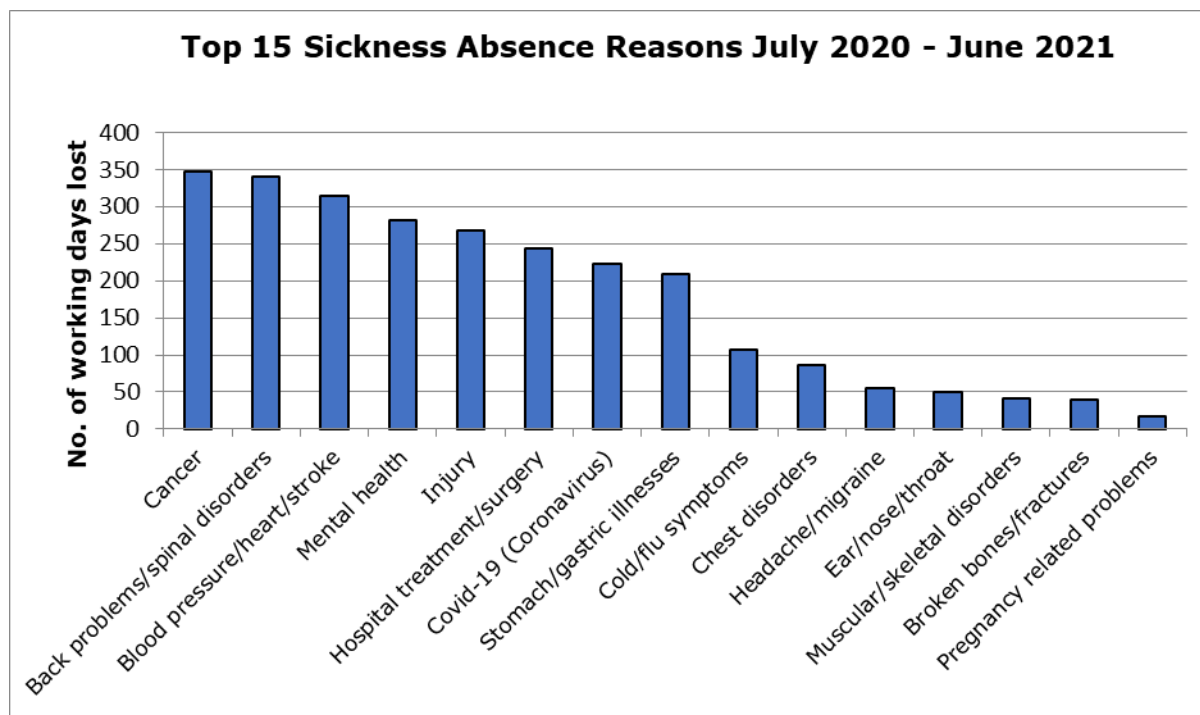
We held our first meeting with the Engagement Group in June which resulted in a useful discussion on the council's engagement survey and provided further suggestions for improvements.

2.2.4 The One Council event was held virtually on the 3 March 2021. The event provided an update on the priorities that we have all been working towards and update on the progress of various projects. The annual staff awards also took place to recognise the great contribution our team members have made to achieving the council's objectives and delivering great services to the public during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3 Resourcing

2.3.1 The council absence rates are closely monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis. The number of days lost due to sickness absence are considerably lower as the current absence rate per FTE for the year July 2020 to June 2021 was 4.76 days, down from 7.57 days per FTE in the previous year.

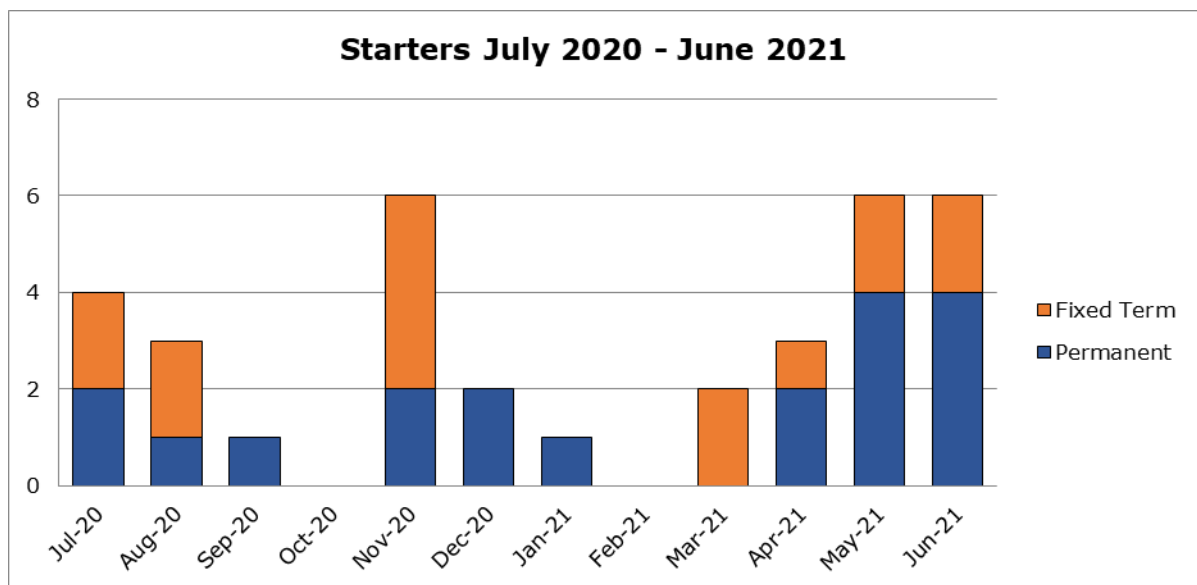
The most common reasons for sickness are shown in the chart below:



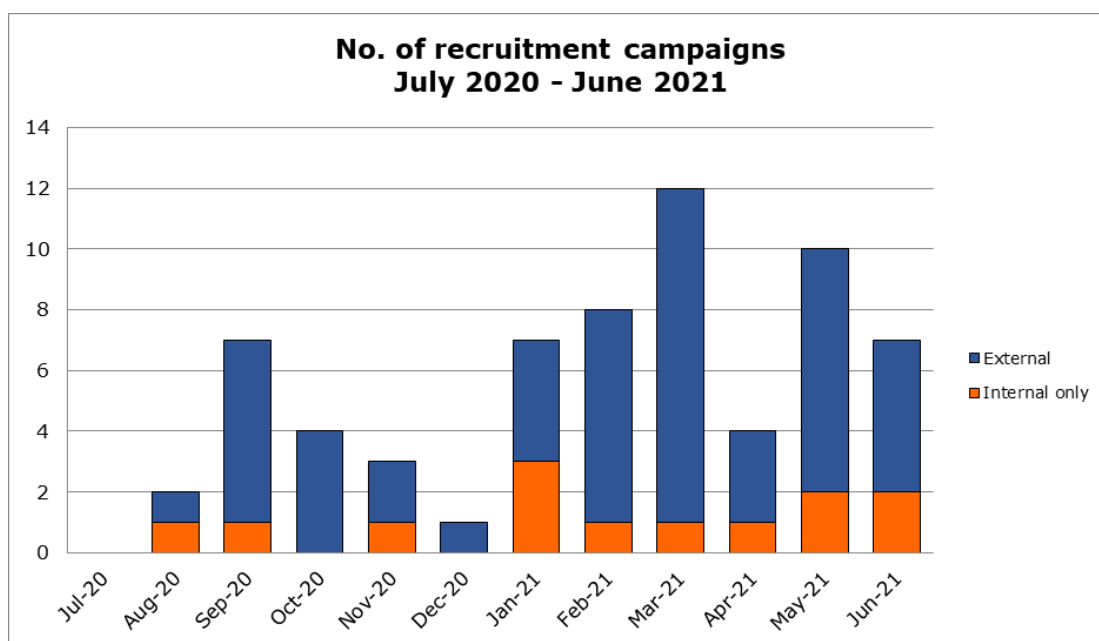
Cancer was the main reason for sickness absence in 2020/21 with 348 working days lost, closely followed by back problems at 340 working days lost. During July 2019 to June 2020, mental health was the main reason for sickness absence with a total of 871 days lost, due mainly to anxiety and stress. Working days lost due to mental health problems has seen a dramatic fall over the past year.

2.3.2 During the period from July 2020 to June 2021, the HR team has supported managers in recruiting 34 new staff at the council. This has included permanent and fixed term contracts to various positions at the council. In addition, there were 37 staff on permanent contracts and 17 staff on fixed term contracts that left the organisation over this period.

The Council's turnover during the year July 2020 to June 2021 was 7.05%. According to figures published by the Local Government Association in March 2021, the average turnover has been reported as 13.4%, but this figure, although the most recently available, does pre-date the pandemic.



The number of recruitment campaigns completed during July 2020 to June 2021 has been 65 and includes both internal and external recruitment. The number of recruitment campaigns has returned to pre-pandemic levels following an initial significant fall at the start.



2.4 Development

2.4.1 In October 2020, our contract for the HR & Payroll system, iTrent was renewed which involved the move of our HR system from on-premise servers to cloud-hosted environment. This work had to be done within a very short period to avoid disruption to the payroll systems for Swale, Maidstone and Dartford councils. The migration team were set with an ambitious challenge of completing the design, test, build and delivery within thirteen weeks. This was achieved and the April payroll was successfully

completed via the hosted environment. The move to the hosted platform has also provided additional advancements to the system as we now have access to manager dashboards, organisational charts, e-signatures for documents we want staff to read and sign electronically and the ability to access the HR system through smart phones which will further support agile working.

- 2.4.2 The Learning & Development team have continued to provide a programme of webinars to support staff with their wellbeing, adjusting to working from home and to provide guidance to managers on managing remote teams. From April 2020 to July 2021, we developed 33 different webinars, delivered across 92 sessions, with 2666 attendees (many employees attend more than one session). These sessions receive positive feedback and will continue to be delivered along with the now monthly staff quiz.
- 2.4.3 The majority of the training plan for 2020-2021 was delivered. There were a couple of programmes that were unable to be run online, but all the other proposed training was delivered virtually to staff.
- 2.4.4 The training plan for 2021-2022 focuses on providing a full programme of training and support to managers and frontline staff. Through focus groups we were able to identify the priority training needs for managers which will support them as we all adapt to agile ways of working. The pandemic has also required many frontline staff to manage and support difficult conversations with residents. In order to support frontline staff with these conversations, training will be provided to address issues that relate to mental health or wellbeing. In addition, we will be rolling out to half the workforce refresher training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, with the other half attending next year. The usual programme of Health and Safety training and Safeguarding training will be available, and the HR Team continue to deliver training in areas such as Managing Change, Recruitment and Selection, Resilient Teams for Managers and Team Facilitation Skills.
- 2.4.5 Check-in, the Council's new approach to performance development, has been rolled out by service area across the Council. All employees are required to have a monthly Check-in with their manager, discussing progress on objectives, development needs, wellbeing, and career aspirations. The check-in, objectives and actions agreed is captured on Clear Review software which is designed for this purpose and easy to use.
- 2.4.6 The Council has 7 apprentices employed within the Council, and a further 7 existing employees studying for professional qualifications as part of an apprenticeship scheme. This enables the council to use the apprenticeship levy to meet the cost of professional training for staff and ensures we will continue to meet the public sector requirement of having 2.3% of the workforce as apprentices.

2.5 Reward

- 2.5.1 The annual Wellbeing week took place between 8 February and 12 February 2021. This was our first virtual wellbeing week as we were unable to hold events in the office due to Covid. A number of events were organised that focussed on wellbeing, mental health and team building activities. We also

arranged Wellbeing Packs to be delivered for the Depot staff as we were aware they would have limited/no internet access to participate in any of the on-line events. Staff feedback was very positive about the events offered and delivered during the week. The aim of the week is to raise awareness on wellbeing by arranging opportunities for staff to get involved in activities that will improve their fitness, mental health and their overall wellbeing.

2.5.2 There have been a number of benefits that have been promoted as well as wellbeing events organised over the last few months. These have included:

- informing staff of National Work life Week that focused on work life balance
- raising awareness men's health by providing a 'virtual' health check and encouraging staff to take part in the Movember campaign
- promoting the council's Tusker Car benefit as well as all other benefits available through the employee benefits portal
- raising awareness of alcohol misuse for the Dry January campaign
- reminding staff of the employee assistance program for advice and support on a number of issues

In addition, HR Surgeries have continued to be organised for staff to provide the opportunity to contact a member of the HR team for advice and support on a confidential basis.

2.6 The Workforce Strategy sets out the key themes and there is an associated action plan that has been updated on a regular basis to ensure the council continues to develop. The action plan is at Appendix I.

3 AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress to date and agree that work continues on the current action plan. Members could substitute alternative actions or add to the existing ones.

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The preferred option is for the Committee to note the developments and support the on-going work.

5 RISK

5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Workforce Strategy was developed with input from the managers in the organisation and discussed with both the trade unions and Staff Forum.
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7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Developments based on the Workforce Strategy are regularly communicated to managers and staff through the council's newsletter, Team Talk activities, consultation with trade unions, Managers Forum and by email.
- 7.2 Actions within the Workforce Strategy are regularly reviewed by the Wider Leadership Team and twice a year by the Committee.
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8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Workforce Plan 2016-2020 Progress July 2021
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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Workforce Strategy

https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/164653/MBC-Workforce-Strategy-2016-to-2020-final-002.pdf

Appendix I Workforce Plan Progress July 2021

Key Theme	Need / Driver	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Update / Timescale	
15	Organisational culture and change	Increased partnership work.	Flexibility in workforce movement.	Secondments arranged into and out of partner sector	HR Manager	Ongoing
	Maintain and develop the organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities	Increased levels of employee engagement	Employee engagement survey	Wider Leadership Team (WLT)	Outcome of survey presented to CLT, WLT and all staff. Follow up pulse survey sent to all staff in Jan 2021. Run another engagement survey in Jan 2022 Team talks ongoing. Delivered One Council briefing on 10 Feb 2021 which includes staff awards. Monthly webinars led by CEO continue to be delivered. New staff engagement group created. Hold meetings regularly and develop an engagement plan with involvement of staff group – monitored by WLT	
			Team talks/briefs; One Council meetings; Service planning and appraisal			
			Develop a Council engagement plan			
	Changes in the way we work	Guidance on agile working for managers and staff	HHR	Framework provided to managers on different workstyles to meet the needs of the business and change in working practices		
			HR Manager	Joint Swale and Maidstone policy on agile working to be agreed by management teams – Sept 2021		
	Workforce culture	Organisational culture meets the changes in working practices	HHR	Review behaviours, values and competencies to support agile ways of working Identify structure and processes to support changes Outline future programme of change for the council		

		Training needs for staff on agile working, mental health and wellbeing	Training for staff and managers to support agile working and manage mental health and wellbeing conversations	L&D Manager	Training Plan for 2021-2022 agreed by WLT. Monthly webinars delivered on wellbeing including mental health. Further training on remote working and managing teams to be introduced.
	Increased income generation including through regeneration and commercialisation	Organisation structure designed to meet key priorities	<p>Senior management structure and development programme</p> <p>Strengthen creative and innovation skills</p> <p>Expansion of Payroll services</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and WLT</p> <p>HHR</p>	<p>On-going capital projects</p> <p>To be delivered through the culture change programme</p> <p>Payroll service for Dartford Borough council - ongoing. To explore opportunities with other external organisations to expand payroll service.</p>
	Senior Leadership is visible	Employees feel that senior leaders are approachable, listen and live the values	One Council briefings, back to the floor and attending local team meetings	Policy, Wider Leadership Team (WLT)	One Council briefings All staff monthly webinars – held virtually Directors attending team meetings – held virtually
			WLT to visit staff during wellbeing week and birthday teas	WLT	On hold.
	Employees are engaged with organisation purpose	Employees know where they fit in to the organisation and how they help deliver priorities	Team talks delivered by line managers	WLT Line managers	Ongoing
	Organisation design	Accommodation design meets the new ways of working	Changes to office accommodation to meet agile ways of working	HHR Head of Commissioning & Business Improvement	Staff survey results reviewed. HOS feedback received. Accommodation options considered and changes to be taken forward

Key Theme	Need / Driver	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Update/ Timescale
Resourcing	The organisation is fully resourced with the right skills to deliver council priorities	Streamlined processes for greater efficiency	Review induction programme for all staff	Head of HR (HHR) Web Team	New digital onboarding induction programme has been designed – launched Sept 2020
		Council is presented in the best light to attract good candidates	Council jobs provide attractive information for candidates	HR Manager	Recruitment advertising contract tendered and awarded. New job page created with information on the borough and the council.
		Competitive employment package to attract and retain good people	Appropriate use of market supplements in skill shortage areas	HR Manager	Ongoing and has improved recruitment in hard to fill areas (Planning and Building Control)
		Maximise effectiveness of the full team to deliver council priorities	Line managers are trained and address performance and absence issues	Line managers	Absence management and Performance management training on-going. New absence records created in iTrent to monitor Covid-19 absence and general sickness
	A representative and balanced workforce	Increase the % of employees under the age of 25	Apprenticeship programme	HHR	Training and qualifications agreed for existing staff through the apprenticeship levy. Recruitment of apprentices to continue. Careers fairs at local schools and colleges – on hold
	A representative and balanced workforce	Council that values equality, diversity and inclusion	Meet the Disability Confident employer status Calculate and report on the Gender Pay Gap	HHR	Ongoing Figures to be updated and published on the Govt website to meet the deadline of 31 March 2021. Minimal difference between male and female pay rates
	The organisation is fully resourced with the right skills to deliver Council priorities	No skill / knowledge gaps because of retirements or turnover	Succession planning and multi-skilling to ensure business continuity	WLT	To complete 'Developing Everyone' analysis following Clear Review Performance conversations in April 2021
		Organisational effectiveness increased, workloads reduced	Change in mind-set of employees to overcome challenges in their roles	L&D Manager	Personal Best training for staff – to be delivered in 2021/22

Key Theme	Need / Driver	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Update/Timescale
Development	Develop consistency of approach by leaders and managers	Managers and leaders know what is expected of them as a 'Maidstone Manager'	Management development; 360°feedback. All new managers to go through the manager induction programme	L&D Manager and WLT	New online induction programme for managers launched in Jan 2021 Management development framework updated
			Pilot new software on performance management	L&D Manager	Clear Review system – implementation programme being delivered to all teams. Roll out completed in Feb 2021
	The organisation is fully resourced with the right skills to deliver council priorities	Blended approach to learning All employees engaged in personal development	All employees have development plan; training plan in place to address future skill gaps	L&D Manager Line managers	Recorded in Clear Review and managed by managers during regular meetings.
			Development of new eLearning package with tailored programmes	L&D Manager	Tender process started on eLearning system
	A flexible workforce	Internal recruitment and selection enables horizontal movement to develop careers and give employment stability	Streamline processes for internal re-deployment. Training for new roles and ways of working eg arising from service reviews and business transformation	HHR	Ongoing
	A flexible workforce	Develop a range of skills	Secondments encouraged	HHR	Ongoing
			Work shadowing process developed to facilitate people spending time in other areas	HHR	WLT/CLT Job Swap programme in place.
	A safe workforce	A strong health and safety culture with minimal accident levels.	Deliver the Health and Safety action plan	Health and Safety Officer Line managers	Ongoing monitoring through the Health & Safety Committee.

Key Theme	Need / Driver	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Update/Timescale
Rewards	Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package so that employees feel they are fairly rewarded.	Update and re-issue employee handbook	HR Manager	To update with new Strategic Plan
			Health and wellbeing initiatives developed	HR Manager Community Development	Ongoing, virtual Well-being week held in February 2021. Roll out wellbeing events during the rest of the year. Flu vaccinations delivered in Oct 2020 Webinars introduced on staff wellbeing and support provided through EAP and occupational health
			Total benefits statement developed	HHR	Webinars on total rewards and benefits delivered regularly
			Enhance rewards and benefit provision at the Council	HR Manager	Ongoing – continuous review of benefits and rewards Introduced payroll giving benefit
		Employees feel they are fairly rewarded	Review pay for lower graded staff Review rewards in terms of future working methods Promote current rewards and benefits	HHR	Implemented Real Living wage in April 2020 for lowest paid staff. Review on car travel allowances – completed Regular communication provided on staff benefits
		Staff feel valued for their contribution	Awards ceremony continued and strengthened	HHR	Included as part of One Council event in Feb 2021
			Mechanisms developed to increase the ways for recognising staff	HHR	Ongoing – webinar to all staff in July 2020 to say ‘thank you’ Revised recognition process through policy & performance introduced

Agenda Item 16

Democracy and General Purposes Committee

27 July 2021

Honorary Alderman - Exceptional Award of Status

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communication and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O'Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

A request has been received to consider the award of Honorary Alderman status to former Councillor Wendy Hinder. The award would not meet the Honorary Alderman protocol as set out in the Constitution, however, there are exceptional circumstances that the Committee are asked to consider.

Purpose of Report

For recommendation to Council

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That Council be recommended to agree that exceptional circumstances apply in the case of former Councillor Wendy Hinder's consideration for Honorary Alderman status and be recommended to grant an exception to protocol in this particular case; and
2. That ahead of that Council decision, officers be requested to take practical steps for an award forwards on an exceptional case basis such that it is ready for consideration at a special Council meeting held for that purpose in late 2021.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	27 July 2021
Council	29 September 2021
Extraordinary Council	TBC

Honorary Alderman - Exceptional Award of Status

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The recommendations will not materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The recommendations will not materially affect achievement of cross cutting objectives.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	Refer to paragraph 5 of the report. All risks are within the Council's risk appetite.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	The financial implications of the decision are the small costs associated with following the Honorary Alderman Protocol, these can be met from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	<p>Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the Council's powers regarding the award of Honorary Alderman status – the recommendations are in line with that section.</p> <p>Further the Council has an adopted an Honorary Alderman protocol and the report seeks consideration for exceptional circumstances to be applied. As the protocol forms part of the Constitution this will need to be agreed by Council.</p>	Principal Solicitor Contentious and Corporate Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	None	Democratic and Electoral

		Services Manager
Public Health	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 A request has been received for the Council to consider conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Wendy Hinder. Sadly, Mrs Hinder passed away whilst in office as Deputy Mayor of Maidstone in February 2020 after serving on the Council for 15 years and 9 months.

2.2 The Council's adopted protocol for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen sets out that:

1. The title of Honorary Alderman can only be conferred to a past member of this authority.
2. Honorary Aldermen must have served 16 years in total, on aggregate, on the Council. When aggregating terms, the same principle will be used when determining precedence as for the Mayoralty, i.e. if there is a break of not more than four years between terms the service can be aggregated.
3. An Honorary Alderman must have demonstrated an exemplary contribution to the Borough during their time served as a Councillor.
4. Honorary Aldermen cannot be appointed posthumously

2.3 These criteria are not set by legislation and were set locally by the Council in adopting its protocol in September 2018.

2.4 In this case an appointment would meet the first criterion but would not meet criteria 2 and 4 as it would for a slightly shorter time and be a

posthumous award. It is for this Committee and ultimately Council to determine criterion 3.

- 2.5 Although the appointment does not meet all the criteria, there are exceptional circumstances that need to be considered. Had Mrs Wendy Hinder not died in office she would have gone on to meet the 16 years threshold (criterion 2) and would have been Mayor of Maidstone. That then means that Mrs Hinder would have been a past Mayor with the civic status that brings. The Honorary Alderman status affords the recipient an equivalent civic status, with, for example, invitations to the same civic events and a name on a roll of honour in the Town Hall.
- 2.6 Given this it is recommended that rather than refuse the request, or rewrite what was a carefully considered protocol, the Committee agree that exceptional circumstances apply and instruct officers to proceed with the nomination for Honorary Alderman. Ultimately, Council will need to agree both the exceptional status of the award to break from protocol at an ordinary meeting, and separately the award of the status at an extraordinary Council meeting.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option one (recommended) – to agree that exceptional circumstances apply, make an appropriate recommendation to Council to allow an exception to its Honorary Alderman protocol, and officers continue with the process as for an Honorary Alderman appointment with the decision on the award ultimately being for Council.
- 3.2 Option two – to consider amending the protocol such that the time period is less than 16 years and awards can be made posthumously with an appropriate recommendation to Council, and officers continue with the process as for an Honorary Alderman appointment with the decision on the award ultimately being for Council.
- 3.3 Option three – to deny the request on the basis that it does not meet the Council's adopted Honorary Alderman protocol.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option one is recommended for the reasons set out in part 2 of this report.
- 4.2 Whilst the circumstances in respect of former councillor Wendy Hinder do not meet the criteria for an award under the adopted protocol there are exceptional factors that apply. Therefore option 3 is not recommended.
- 4.3 Option two is not recommended as a significant amount of work by this Committee and others went into forming the existing protocol. It is therefore felt more appropriate to consider the specific circumstances of this case and determine whether it should go ahead.

5. RISK

- 5.1 There is a risk of challenge to the Council's decisions to apply exceptional circumstances to existing protocol. However, given the nature of the case and the award this seems unlikely. Risk mitigation is to ensure that proper process is followed in decision making.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If the recommendations are agreed a reference will go to Council in September 2021 requesting that they agree exceptional circumstances.
- 7.2 Officers will progress the consideration of the award of Honorary Alderman status and make the necessary arrangements for it to be able to be properly considered by Council. For example, speaking to relevant Members about whether to bring forward a motion at a special Council meeting.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen – Maidstone Borough Council Constitution – Dated May 2021

Democracy and General Purposes Committee

27 July 2021

Local Government Boundary Review – Council Size Submission

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes
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 a recommended approach for the Council to complete its council size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the approach and timetable outlined in section 2 be agreed and that the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance liaise with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on questions that arise requiring Member input between now and the Committee meeting on 13 October 2021.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	27 July 2021

Local Government Boundary Review – Council Size Submission

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The boundary review indirectly impacts on all Council priorities by ensuring that appropriate democratic representation is in place and there is democratic equality for each elector in the Borough.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The boundary review indirectly impacts on all Council objectives by ensuring that appropriate democratic representation is in place and there is democratic equality for each elector in the Borough.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	The report sets out a proposed plan for making the Council's Council Size Submission to the LGBCE to manage the risk of a poor submission. All relevant risks are considered to be within the Council's risk appetite.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation include a small amount of expenditure of less than £3k which will be managed from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. However, the need for additional staffing in Democratic Services is being kept under review in light of the significant programme of work coming forward this year and the possible implications of new executive arrangements going forwards.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	This work is part of the Local Government Boundary Review being conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and aims to complete their template in accordance with their timetable. The review will be conducted by the LGBCE under	Legal Team

	its powers in The Local democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009	
Privacy and Data Protection	No impact identified.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	No direct impacts identified, however, one of the key aims of the boundary review is to ensure that there is equality for electors in their democratic representation.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Public Health	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	The facilitated sessions will involve engaging with an external provider, initial contact has been made with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Total expenditure is estimated to be less <£3k but this will be confirmed and proper procurement processes followed as appropriate.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report sets out the next stage of work required in Maidstone's Local Government Boundary Review. A review is broadly set out in two stages:

Stage 1 – Council Size Submission
Stage 2 – Boundaries

- 2.2 The Council needs to submit its council size submission by December 2021, we agreed an extension with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to December to time with an existing Council meeting. This submission has a significant dependency on the executive arrangements work (this impacts on a number of elements of the Council's submission), and a minimal dependency on the whole council elections work (whether the number of Councillors needs to be divisible by

three or not, and if the electoral cycle changes this can be adjusted by the LGBCE at a later date).

- 2.3 The Council needs to consider a variety of size options with considered rationale for its preferred size and the guidance on completing a Council Size submission is set out in **Appendix 1**. Any submission needs to be considered in the context of the authority versus the comparable authorities as identified by the LGBCE. The range of Council sizes for comparable authorities produces an expected range, this is set out at **Appendix 3**. Whilst those figures do not limit the Council, any size submission away from those ranges will need strong justification, and the further the departure the greater the justification required.
- 2.4 *"The Commission wants to see evidence that several different council size options have been explored together with the reasons why a particular figure has, or has not, been selected. This should be done irrespective of whether the respondent arrives at the same or a different number of elected members. The most persuasive submissions are those which, rather than considering whether the current number ought not to be changed, reflect on what number of councillors would be required if the council was being newly established."*
- 2.5 The work required to complete the submission can be broken down into key elements, the guidance on the main 'Council Size' element of the template is as follows:

"The Commission seeks to understand elected member requirements across three aspects:

Strategic Leadership

How many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority?

Accountability

- 1. Scrutiny – how many councillors are needed to provide scrutiny to the authority?*
- 2. Regulatory – how many councillors are needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the authority?*
- 3. Partnerships – how many councillors are required to manage partnerships between the local authority and other organisations?*

Community Leadership

How the representational role of councillors in the local community is discharged and how they engage with people and conduct casework"

- 2.6 There are other key elements to the template to which are set out below as part of the approach proposed by officers on completing the form efficiently, whilst maximising Member input.

2.7 **Proposed Approach to Completing the Council Size Submission**

Below are extracts from the Council Size Submission Template (set out in full at **Appendix 2**). These cover what are considered to be the key parts of the template and next to each area of work is the suggested method of completion. Please note that the Committee will see the template several times as it is completed and will be able to feed into it as a whole.

2.8 **CONTEXT [to be started by officers but discussed at a facilitated session with Members]**

*"Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward."*

2.9 **LOCAL AUTHORITY PROFILE [to be completed by officers]**

"Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics."

2.10 **COUNCIL SIZE [see completion method for each sub-heading]**

- Strategic Leadership [completed by officers via the information coming from the executive arrangements work currently underway]
- Accountability
 - Scrutiny [completed by officers via the information coming from the executive arrangements work]
 - Regulatory [completed by officers for elements that remain static, but informed by the executive arrangements work too]
 - External partnerships [completed by officers]
- Community Leadership [completed via facilitated session with Members]

All to be approved by DGP prior for submission to Council

2.11 **SUMMARY [Overall size submission to be covered at a facilitated session with Members, with officers to produce first draft for Committee comment and sign-off]**

"In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future."

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered."

2.12 Facilitated Sessions

The methods of completion reference three elements to be covered by facilitated sessions with Members – these are Context (focus on where the Council sees itself in 15-20 years' time), Council Size (specifically Community Leadership), and Summary (focus on council size options and rationale, including those discounted). It is proposed that these areas can be covered in two all Member sessions with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny facilitating, the cost of this work would be <£3k, as follows:

Session 1 – Focus on Size Factors - Community Leadership and Context (15-20 years' time)

Session 2 – Focus on Options - Summary (Council size options and rationale)

- 2.13 There are LGBR reports included in the work programme for 8 September 2021 and 13 October 2021. However, it is recommended that the 8 September LGBR specific report be removed and replaced with facilitated sessions with Members held prior to 13 October meeting. The 8 September meeting will be focussed on Whole Council Elections and more crucially for this work, the Executive arrangements, needed to inform the template. The timetable for the Council size submission template is therefore proposed as follows:

Date	Activity	Outputs
27 July 2021 to 1 October 2021	Officers complete draft template Facilitated Session 1 Facilitated Session 2	Draft template Outputs on community leadership, the Council in 15-20 years' time, size options considered and rationale
8 September 2021	D&GP consider Executive arrangements	Executive arrangements, including Scrutiny and other governance impacts to input into the template
13 October 2021	D&GP consider outputs from sessions and template draft	Agreement to updated draft template and committee ownership of outputs
13 October 2021 to 1 November 2021	All Member briefing session	Feedback from wider Council membership
10 November 2021	D&GP sign off final template draft	Agreed template for Council (with delegation for minor tweaks and corrections as necessary)
8 December 2021	Council Meeting	Agreed submission to LGBCE

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 - The Council makes a council size submission using the approach outlined in section 2 of the report, or as amended by the Committee.
 - 3.2 Option 2 - The Council makes a council size submission on a radically different basis to that set out.
 - 3.3 Option 3 – The Council doesn’t make a size submission and disengages from the Local Government Boundary Review process, this would result in the LGBCE agreeing a new size of Council with no Council input.
 - 3.4 Please note that Political (or other) groups may also make their own council size submissions (paragraph 20 of the guidance), however that is a matter entirely for each of those groups if they wish to do so.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is recommended for the reasons outlined in section 2 as part of the option narrative.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The approach outlined in this report is designed to manage the Council’s risk of failing to produce a size submission on time and to the necessary quality to ensure a well thought through and appropriate Council size for the Council going forwards. This is crucial to ensure that the residents of Maidstone have an appropriate body of Members to represent them on the Council.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 An update on the Local Government Boundary Review was last provided to the Committee in March 2021 and an all Member briefing was held on 22 March 2021.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The timetable set out at 2.13 sets out the next steps.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Council Size Submission Guidance
- Appendix 2: Council Size Submission Template
- Appendix 3: Extract from LGBR Briefing (Appendix 4: Council Size Expected Range)

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work>

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Council Size Guidance

A guide to making a strong submission

Contents

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Introduction

1. This guidance will assist interested parties in preparing their submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') as part of the electoral review process. It highlights the range of issues that the Commission considers when determining council size and will help councillors, officers and others in making strong and well-evidenced submissions.
2. The starting point for every review is to decide the appropriate number of councillors for the authority. While the final decision on council size rests with the Commission, its approach has always been one of dialogue with each council that it reviews. The Commission's view is that a 'good' review is one where the local authority actively engages with the process. Ideally, the Commission's decision will be informed by locally generated proposals and underpinned by sound evidence and reasoning.

What is Council Size?

3. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009¹ ('the 2009 Act') gives the Commission the power to review the electoral arrangements of all, or any, principal councils in England.
4. The legislation states that 'the total number of members of the council' forms part of an authority's electoral arrangements. The Commission refers to this more simply as 'council size'. The legislation does not set out how many members (or councillors) each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the Commission's responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority.
5. The Commission will always recommend a council size that, in its judgement, enables the council to take its decisions effectively, to discharge the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and to provide for effective community leadership and representation.

General Principles

6. The Commission recognises that there is considerable variation in council size across England, not only between different types of local authority – metropolitan, unitary, shire district and county councils, and London boroughs – but also between authorities of the same type.
7. In the Commission's opinion, local government is as diverse as the communities it serves – providing leadership, services and representation suited to the characteristics and needs of individual areas. The Commission aims to recommend electoral arrangements, including council size, which are appropriate for the particular local authority.

¹ *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*, s.55–9
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/pdfs/ukpga_20090020_en.pdf

8. The way in which local authorities conduct their business and provide for the effective representation of their electorate has changed considerably over recent decades. The implementation of the Local Government Act 2000 ('the 2000 Act') saw most local authorities change how they made decisions and operate. Similarly, subsequent legislation, including the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Localism Act 2011, introduced further opportunities for local government to modify governance and management arrangements. In addition, partnership working, developments in service delivery, and digital working have also impacted on local authorities.
9. Many local authorities have not, or have only slightly, modified their number of elected members since they were established several decades ago. This is not to imply that current numbers are inappropriate but, rather than simply assuming that the existing numbers remain appropriate, the Commission recommends that councils think afresh about the matter.
10. An electoral review provides the opportunity for respondents to think carefully about current arrangements in the context of modern governance and service delivery needs; and what these mean for the future in terms of the number of elected members.
11. The Commission wants to see evidence that several different council size options have been explored together with the reasons why a particular figure has, or has not, been selected. This should be done irrespective of whether the respondent arrives at the same or a different number of elected members. The most persuasive submissions are those which, rather than considering whether the current number ought not to be changed, reflect on what number of councillors would be required if the council was being newly established.
12. The Commission does not recommend that any submissions made on council size need to be particularly long. However, submissions should be made on the Commission's Council Size Submission Template and demonstrate careful thinking about the issues. Electoral reviews take place infrequently and the Commission wants local authorities to take the opportunity to ask themselves questions about the important roles of councillors in providing leadership, securing accountability and offering community leadership.
13. The Commission seeks to understand elected member requirements across three aspects:
 - **Strategic Leadership** – how many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority?
 - **Accountability**
 - *Scrutiny* – how many councillors are needed to provide scrutiny to the authority?
 - *Regulatory* – how many councillors are needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the authority?

- *Partnerships* – how many councillors are required to manage partnerships between the local authority and other organisations?
- **Community Leadership** – how the representational role of councillors in the local community is discharged and how they engage with people and conduct casework.

14. In every review, the Commission will make recommendations that will remain appropriate for the medium to longer term, i.e. to recommend a council size that delivers effective and convenient local government well after the completion of the electoral review. Accordingly, respondents should set out their longer-term vision for operation of the local authority.

Approach

15. The Commission must construct electoral arrangements that reflect local circumstances, and in doing so will neither apply any strict mathematical criteria nor impose a formula for the national determination of council size. It is recommended that submissions clearly demonstrate the characteristics and needs of each local authority, and its communities, and how such factors have informed both the proposed and alternative council sizes considered.
16. The Commission will refer to the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model for English authorities to help understand the contextual position of the authority being reviewed. This is a licensed² dataset that shows groups of statistically similar councils and allows the Commission to identify ‘expected ranges’ for both the number of councillors and the councillor-to-electors ratios. This expected range is defined by an upper and lower quintile value with the median providing the midpoint figure. The data help the Commission understand how the authority under review compares with its nearest neighbours and, on occasion to query proposals that appear unexpected when compared with similar authorities.
17. Local authorities should be mindful of the overall appropriateness of the proposed council sizes in terms of governance, specifically in ensuring that an authority is neither too small to discharge its statutory functions nor too large to function in an effective manner and with purposeful roles for all elected members. Accordingly, whilst recognising that such thresholds might vary depending on the type of local authority and its specific setting, the Commission will look for particularly strong evidence in support of proposals that place the authority amongst the highest and lowest levels of similar councils nationwide, especially where authorities would be below 30 or exceed 85 councillors in size.
18. The Commission’s decision about an authority’s council size will mark the formal start to the review process. However, the Commission’s decision on council size will not be formalised until the Final Recommendations are agreed and published. This is because the number of councillors may change marginally (generally ± 1)

² Under the terms of the data licence the Commission is unable to share the CIPFA Nearest Neighbour Model externally although some authorities will have access to the groupings through their own licences. The ‘expected ranges’, however, will be made available.

from the initial decision if it is felt that modifying the number of councillors may provide for a pattern of wards that better reflects the three statutory criteria.

19. The Final Recommendations describe the complete set of electoral arrangements, including ward names and locations as well as the number of elected members, alongside parish warding arrangements. These recommendations will be implemented at the next election by means of an Order laid before Parliament.

Multiple Submissions and Balancing the Evidence

20. Political (or other) groups may present their own submissions to the Commission either alongside or as an alternative to the council's formal submission. It is recommended that all submissions are underpinned by sound evidence and reasoning whether they propose to reduce, retain or increase councillor numbers.
21. All submissions will be considered equally, and decisions will be made based on the strength of evidence put forward.
22. **Where the Commission receives multiple finely balanced proposals, or a single poorly evidenced case, it may request further information from the respondents. If further information is not forthcoming, the Commission reserves the right to put forward its own number based on its own experience and judgement. It may also choose to carry out a period of consultation.**

Making a Submission

23. All submissions made to the Commission will follow the 'Council Size Submission' template. This template presents a broad set of issues for respondents to consider; however, the Commission does not require lengthy responses to every section. The Commission recommends that respondents use the opportunity to consider not just how the council works now but how it is likely to work in the future. Submissions will explain the reasoning that underpins and explains the proposed council size as well as describing the necessary arrangements.
24. The submission will focus on three aspects of councillor roles: Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership. However, the Commission will consider any further relevant issues raised outside of these topics.

Maidstone Borough Council

Council Size Submission: Template

[Maidstone Borough Council]

Contents

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How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and

determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
Governance Model	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other? ➤ The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require? ➤ If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority. ➤ By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them? ➤ Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Portfolios	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many portfolios will there be? ➤ What will the role of a portfolio holder be? ➤ Will this be a full-time position? ➤ Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Delegated Responsibilities	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees? ➤ How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.

<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How will decision makers be held to account? ➤ How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be? ➤ How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place? ➤ How many members will be required to fulfil these positions? ➤ Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority. ➤ Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.
Analysis		Click or tap here to enter text.
Statutory Function		This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members? ➤ Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated? ➤ Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee? ➤ Will executive members serve on the planning committees? ➤ What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year? ➤ And what will be the time commitment for members? ➤ Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc? ➤ Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
External Partnerships		Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In

	<p><i>doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Casework	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i>

		<p>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></p> <p>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></p>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Summary

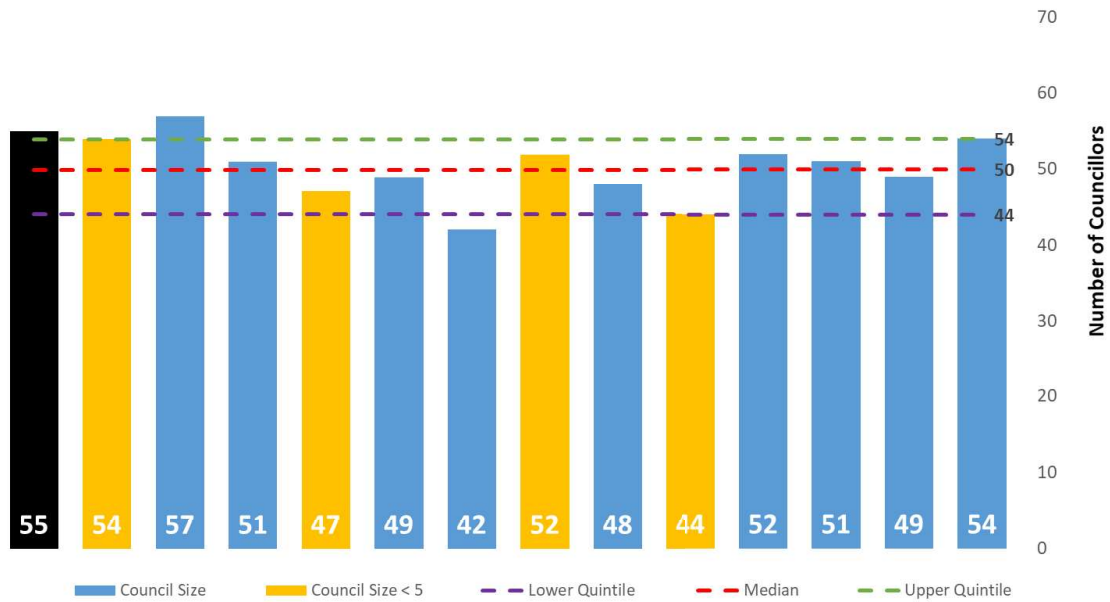
In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Appendix 4: Council Size Expected Range

2019 CIPFA Group and Councillor Counts



Agenda Item 18

Democracy and General Purposes Committee

27 July 2021

Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary Commission for England Consultation

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

The report sets out a proposed response to the Boundary Commission for England’s consultation on new Parliamentary constituencies.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the consultation response at Appendix 1 be agreed.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	27 July 2021

Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary Commission for England Consultation

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	There are no direct impacts on the Council's corporate priorities, but the ability of the Council to run effective parliamentary elections is important for Council reputation. The ability to operate effectively with local MPs could also have an indirect impact on Council objectives.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	There are no direct impacts on the Council's cross cutting objectives. The ability to operate effectively with local MPs could have an indirect impact on Council objectives.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	The risks relating to making the consultation response are considered to minimal and within the Council's risk appetite. Risks as they relate to elections, through the additional complexities inherent in three constituencies are discussed in the proposed response.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	None. Additional funding would be provided by the Cabinet Office for the running of an additional constituency election during a parliamentary election.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	None.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	The provisions related to the BCE procedures are within The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1886, as amended and the implications are as set out in the body of the report.	Principal Solicitor Contentious and Corporate Governance

Privacy and Data Protection	None.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Public Health	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is currently undertaking a consultation on its revised Parliamentary Constituency proposals for England. The consultation ends on 2 August 2021.

2.2 The BCE set out the context of their consultation on their website:

"Following the passing of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 in December 2020, and the publication of the relevant Parliamentary electorate data in January 2021, we began a new review of all Parliamentary constituencies in England. We refer to this as the '2023 Review', as we are required to report with our final recommendations by 1 July 2023.

Applying the statutory formula to the electorate figures means the total 650 constituencies is distributed during the review to the four parts of the UK as follows:

*England = 543 (includes two 'protected' constituencies on the Isle of Wight);
Scotland = 57 (includes two 'protected' constituencies for specified Scottish islands);
Wales = 32 (includes one 'protected' constituency on the Isle of Anglesey); and
Northern Ireland = 18"*

- 2.3 For the South East this breaks down as 91 constituencies, an increase of seven on the current number.
- 2.4 The key element of electorate restrictions for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries is as follows:

"Application of further statutory rules to the published electorate also means that all recommended constituencies must have no less than 69,724 Parliamentary electors and no more than 77,062 (except those 'protected' constituencies mentioned above). By law, these electorate figures relate to the electorates as they were on 2 March 2020."

- 2.5 The remaining stages of the BCE timetable for the review are:
- **8 June 2021:** Publish initial proposals and conduct eight-week written consultation;
 - Early 2022: Publish responses to initial proposals and conduct six-week 'secondary consultation', including between two and five public hearings in each region;
 - Late 2022: Publish revised proposals and conduct four-week written consultation;
 - June 2023: Submit and publish final report and recommendations.

2.6 The Proposals

The review and consultation can be found here:

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/>

And the three proposed constituencies are attached at Appendices 2 to 4.

- 2.7 Appendix 1 sets out officers' recommended response to these proposals, which is to object and suggest principles to create two constituencies to better help the people of Maidstone, and not split the Borough across three areas as this creates additional issues on community identity and election complexities in particular. A specific proposal is also put forward to provide a solid alternative and demonstrate the application of the principles.

2.8 Requirements of the Response

The BCE in its guide to the review sets out how it would like responses to be given in this consultation:

"Those who respond to the consultation are requested to say whether they approve of, or object to, the BCE's proposals. In particular, objectors are advised to say what they propose in place of the BCE's proposals. An objection accompanied by a viable counterproposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection." In this respect – and particularly in light of the importance of Rule 2 (statutory electorate range) – a counterproposal setting out the composition of each

constituency in an area will generally be viewed as more persuasive than a proposal for the composition of only one constituency which does not address any knock-on effects on the electorate figures of neighbouring constituencies.”

- 2.9 Officers have looked at the interactive boundary maps, which is a comprehensive tool, and have produced a specific proposal to build on the principles set out. However, whilst the proposed solutions are viable, and arguably an improvement on current arrangements for Maidstone, it is acknowledged that there will be knock on impacts for other constituencies.
- 2.10 The proposed alternative therefore is to put forward a broad alternative of establishing principles for any constituencies for Maidstone, and to provide a specific proposal demonstrating the application of them. The principles of an acceptable proposal are for one that:
1. Is as close to the BCE’s own mathematical calculation of 1.64 constituencies being appropriate for Maidstone Borough (i.e. 2 constituencies) as possible
 2. That the urban area of Maidstone be kept as whole as possible given the community identity it represents and the benefit this would bring to a single MP for the Town
 3. That the rural areas of Maidstone be kept as close to a whole as possible given their linkages locally, whilst recognising their differences, and the benefit this would bring for a single MP for the rural parts of the Borough
 4. That these constituencies be supplemented as required from interconnected areas – i.e. practical urban extensions to Maidstone to the West and North West for the Urban area, and Southern/South Western parts of the Weald and areas with connections for the Rural area.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 –To agree the consultation response, objecting to the proposed constituencies, outlined at Appendix 1, adding any contributions Members may wish to emphasise or make.
- 3.2 Option 2 – To not object and submit a consultation response in support of the proposals. This is not recommended for the reasons outlined in the proposed response.
- 3.3 Option 3 – Not submit a consultation response – this is not recommended as it is important to express the views of local areas in order to inform the review and produce a better outcome for the Borough of Maidstone.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 – for the reasons set out in the proposed response.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks relating to making the consultation response are considered to minimal and within the Council's risk appetite. Risks as they relate to elections, through the additional complexities inherent in three constituencies are discussed in the proposed response.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The response will be submitted to the consultation by the deadline of 2 August 2021.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Proposed Consultation Response
 - Appendices 2 - 4: Proposed Constituency Boundaries
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/guide-to-the-2023-review-of-parliamentary-constituencies/>

Proposed Maidstone Borough Council Response

Maidstone Borough Council objects to the proposals as put forward. There is merit to consider parts of Maidstone with an extension to the urban area to the west along the A20, but the objections are set out below along with suggested principles to be considered for any alternative constituencies and a specific proposal built on those principles.

In considering our proposed principles and the feedback to the existing proposals Maidstone has considered four main areas of feedback:

- Election Complexities
- Community Identities
- Political Engagement
- Ward Boundary Review

Election complexities

The proposals set out three constituencies covering the Borough of Maidstone:

Constituency	Authority with Greatest % of Electorate (Lead)	Authorities Covered
Faversham and Mid-Kent	Maidstone	Ashford, Maidstone, Swale
Maidstone and Malling	Maidstone	Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling
Weald of Kent	Maidstone	Ashford, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells

This represents a significant increase in the complexities of running a Parliamentary Election in Maidstone. Currently Maidstone has two constituencies each shared with one other authority (one with Swale and one with Tunbridge Wells).

Parliamentary elections are the largest single elections that the Council runs. Increasing the number of constituencies is a matter of resourcing but increasing the number of constituencies and the complexity of each constituency through working with multiple authorities increases risks around delivery. The sharing of data, the timings of counting, the management of multiple types of ballot box and equipment, postal vote complexities, polling staff provided different training in different areas, to name but a few of the potential risks.

Maidstone Borough Council is well used to running elections, with elections by thirds, and has just delivered Covid secure elections for Police and Crime Commissioner, County, Borough, Parish and Neighbourhood Referendums at the same time. However, risks associated with elections should not be increased without good reason to do so. To reiterate this is not simply a matter of scale (Maidstone would be handling 220,000 electorate at traditionally high turnout elections) for which additional resourcing can be provided, but of complexity in sharing those 220,000 electorate across five local government areas.

Community identities

There are concerns over the identities of the new constituencies. Whilst the inclusion of the Malling areas with Maidstone makes sense on the ground, with Maidstone having a physical and cultural link to areas along the A20 to the West (as set out in our own suggested principles), the split of some parts of the town towards Faversham and Mid Kent, now including parts of the Ashford district, exacerbates an already existing identity issue for the constituency. It is hard to identify a link between residents in urban parts of Maidstone, such as Shepway North and South and Park Wood with residents along the A249 and out towards Faversham.

Furthermore, the Weald of Kent, represents a large geographic area crossing three districts' boundaries containing some distinctive places and identities.

If the Borough of Maidstone does need to split into three (which is arguable given the commission's own mathematical calculation of the number of constituencies required, based on the electorate, at 1.64 constituencies) then it would seem to make sense to use the flexibility afforded to try to create areas of common identity.

This is a concern not just for residents but surely also a consideration for the prospective MPs for those areas who would no doubt wish to ensure they are representing all residents equally regardless of which part of their constituency they are from. It is also crucial that residents identify with their MP as their democratic representative. Additionally, MPs in two of the three constituencies will be working with three separate local authorities.

We are therefore proposing principles and an alternative that maximise place based identity and would allow governance in a coherent way across our geography.

Political engagement

Maidstone currently has two MPs and feedback has been received from Members and officers on difficulties that can arise on the handling of cross Borough matters with two MPs, especially when existing constituencies split across Borough boundaries and areas that aren't linked (see Community Identities above). This is likely to be exacerbated with the Maidstone town split in two and the Borough further split into three and shared across five council areas. This creates significant work for the relevant MPs and makes crucial communication and engagement on strategic issues between the Council and MPs, even harder.

Ward Boundaries

It is understood that there had to be a cut off point for Ward Boundaries and Local Government Boundary reviews as a matter of practicality in any such boundary review. However, Maidstone would like to highlight that we are at the start of a boundary review which, given the length of time since our last review, the electorate disparities in wards and the growth projections, is likely to result in significant changes. The review will report in 2023, to be implemented for the first time in 2024. Especially with three constituencies proposed across our Borough this may well result in wards being split across constituency lines, something we know the commission is keen to avoid.

Alternative Proposal

The alternative proposal is in two parts:

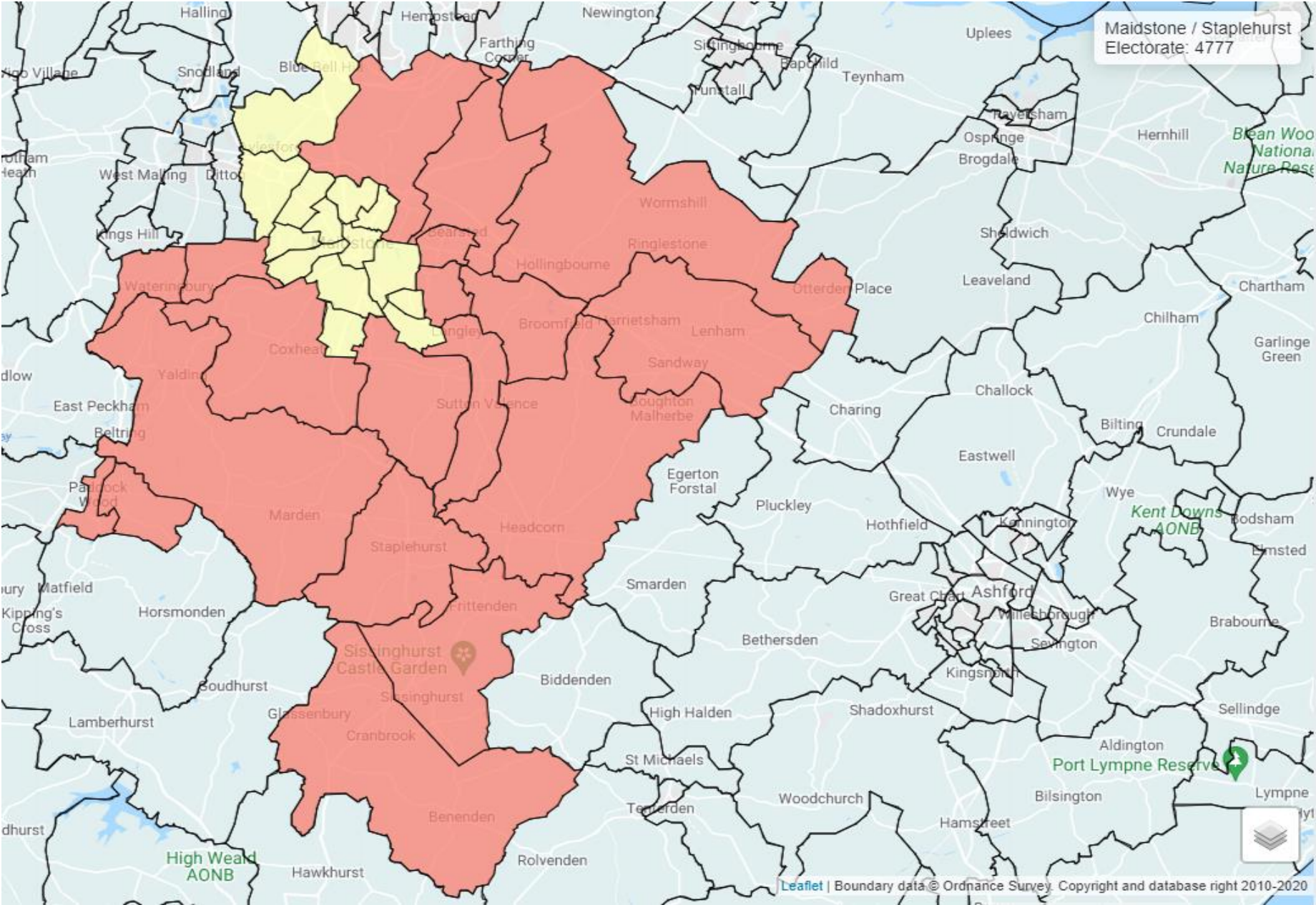
1. **A non-specific one**, as we appreciate there will be significant knock on impacts of what we are proposing that we do not have the knowledge to understand in detail, but consider that the **following principles should be followed to create a 2 constituency area for Maidstone**:
 - i. Is as close to the BCE's own mathematical calculation of 1.64 constituencies being appropriate for Maidstone Borough (i.e. 2 constituencies) as possible
 - ii. That the urban area be kept as whole as possible given the community identity it represents and the benefit this would bring to a single MP for the Town
 - iii. That the rural areas of Maidstone be kept as close to a whole as possible given their linkages locally, whilst recognising their differences, and the benefit this would bring for a single MP for the rural parts of the Borough
 - iv. That these constituencies be supplemented as required from interconnected areas – i.e. practical urban extensions to Maidstone to the West and North West for the Urban area, and Southern/South Western parts of the Weald and areas with connections for the Rural area.
2. **A specific proposal**, we appreciate that whilst we cannot factor in all the knock on impacts it would be useful to see a demonstration of the principles applied in practice and an application of local areas. Both these constituencies meet the electorate criteria.

The specific proposal defines an 'urban area' for Maidstone, bringing in key parts of the area in Shepway North, Shepway South and Park Wood from the current Faversham and Mid Kent constituency. This resolves the community identity issue of being linked up the A249 to Faversham, an area they have no linkages with.

This Maidstone area is then supplemented with areas of linked relevance to the Maidstone Town. Inevitably given Maidstone itself abuts its own Borough boundary to the West and North West this involves those areas, namely the area beyond the Maidstone Hospital and includes a retail area that is intrinsically linked to Maidstone (Aylesford South). We have also included Aylesford North and Walderslade, areas with close connections with the Town and includes Bluebell Hill an area that has practical linkages (i.e. traffic issues that impact closely on the Town), and would benefit from having a single MP covering the area. This constituency could simply be 'Maidstone'.

The second constituency has been labelled as 'Maidstone Rural' to indicate its nature as the parliamentary constituency naming conventions are unknown. This constituency takes the existing Faversham and Mid-Kent areas in Maidstone Borough and adds the rural elements of Maidstone and the Weald as well as adding Paddock Wood West and Paddock Wood East. Again, Paddock Wood has practical linkages to Maidstone on the ground, and it also adds Watlingbury (from Tonbridge and Malling). This choice was made to bring up the necessary electorate despite the trade-off of introducing another Borough as Watlingbury is a more natural extension of the boundary along the A26. Whilst this would mean the 'Maidstone Rural' election would involve three authorities, it would not increase the overall total number of authorities involved and this would help manage election complexities.

We hope this demonstrates the application of the principles and concerns raised in creating two constituencies that would work for create cohesive community identities, the running of effective elections, the Council's working relationship with its MPs, the MPs themselves, and above all for the residents of Maidstone Borough and beyond.



Boundary Commission for England - Initial Proposals for the South East Region

Faversham and Mid Kent County Constituency - Electorate 76,432



- Wards:
- 1 Abbey
 - 2 Bearsted
 - 3 Boughton and Courtenay
 - 4 Boxley
 - 5 Charing
 - 6 Detling and Thurnham
 - 7 Downs North
 - 8 Downs West
 - 9 Downswood and Otham
 - 10 East Downs
 - 11 Harrietsham and Lenham
 - 12 North Downs
 - 13 Park Wood
 - 14 Priory
 - 15 Shepway North
 - 16 Shepway South
 - 17 St. Ann's
 - 18 Teynham and Lynsted
 - 19 Watling
 - 20 West Downs

- Constituency
- Local Authorities
- Wards

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Faversham and Mid Kent County Constituency

Boundary Commission for England - Initial Proposals for the South East Region

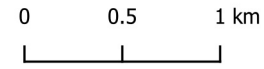
Maidstone and Malling County Constituency - Electorate 74,685



Wards:

- 1 Allington
- 2 Aylesford South
- 3 Barming and Teston
- 4 Bridge
- 5 Ditton
- 6 East
- 7 East Malling
- 8 Fant
- 9 Heath
- 10 High Street
- 11 Kings Hill
- 12 North
- 13 South
- 14 Watlingbury
- 15 West Malling and Leybourne

- Constituency
- Local Authorities
- Wards



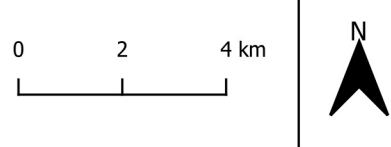
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Maidstone and Malling County Constituency



- Wards:
- 1 Benenden and Cranbrook
 - 2 Biddenden
 - 3 Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton
 - 4 Coxheath and Hunton
 - 5 Frittenden and Sissinghurst
 - 6 Hawkhurst and Sandhurst
 - 7 Headcorn
 - 8 Isle of Oxney
 - 9 Kingsnorth Village & Bridgefield
 - 10 Leeds
 - 11 Loose
 - 12 Marden and Yalding
 - 13 Rolvenden & Tenterden West
 - 14 Saxon Shore
 - 15 Staplehurst
 - 16 Sutton Valence and Langley
 - 17 Tenterden North
 - 18 Tenterden South
 - 19 Tenterden St. Michael's
 - 20 Upper Weald
 - 21 Weald Central
 - 22 Weald North
 - 23 Weald South

- Constituency
- Local Authorities
- Wards



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