

Local Government Boundary Review Update

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

Executive Summary

This report sets out the status, timetable and next steps for the Local Government Boundary Review. It updates Members and informs them of the work required to be done and in particular that the consultation on boundaries will be live by the time of the meeting and that they as individuals or as groups can contribute to it.

Purpose of Report

Decision.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the proposed timetable (2.6) and approach set out in the report be agreed; and
2. That the tight and intense period of work required with Members between the February and March meetings of the Committee be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
D&GP Committee	26 January 2022
D&GP Committee	16 February 2022
D&GP Committee	9 March 2022
Council	13 April 2022

Local Government Boundary Review - Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Local Government Boundary Review will result in a new warding scheme and number of councillors for Maidstone that ensures equality for the electorate. This will not impact Corporate Priorities directly but will impact on all of them indirectly.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The Local Government Boundary Review will result in a new warding scheme and number of councillors for Maidstone that ensures equality for the electorate. This will not impact Cross Cutting Objectives directly but will impact on all of them indirectly.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	Refer to section 5 of the report.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	There are no direct financial considerations from the matters considered in this report.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	There will be an intense period of work required between the February and March D&GP meetings but this will not require additional staffing.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	The review is being conducted by the LGBCE under its powers in The Local democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.	Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Privacy and Data Protection	None	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The review aims to achieve electoral equality for the residents of Maidstone. There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA	Equalities & Communities Officer

	would be carried out as part of a policy or service change should one be identified.	
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 Council agreed its size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in December 2021. The LGBCE will consider that submission at its meeting on 18 January 2022 the outcome of which will be known after the publication of this report and an update provided at the meeting.
- 2.2 Council also agreed, in December, to adopt Whole Council Elections from 2024 and this has been reported to the LGBCE as required by legislation and published by way of a notice and explanatory document. This will have an impact on the current stage of our boundary review in two ways:
1. The Commission may now decide to adopt a council size that is not a multiple of three (or to tweak the size slightly later after the boundaries are determined); and
 2. The approved warding pattern will not have to consist only of three Member wards (with exceptions), but can be a mixture of one, two and three Member wards.
- 2.3 The possibility of a single Member warding pattern (where all wards have one Member) was discussed with the LGBCE to understand its implications. No indication has been given by Members at any point that this is something they wish to pursue, and the general advice from the LGBCE is that this is better suited to wholly urban areas. However, as part of proposals single Member wards could be considered for certain areas due to the flexibility afforded by adopting whole council elections.

- 2.4 All the information requested by the LGBCE has been supplied to them to enable them to start their boundary consultation on 25 January 2022 (this will have started by the time of the Committee meeting). The information supplied included relevant boundaries (wards, parishes, polling districts), key stakeholders, local orders and electorate forecasts for 2027 broken down across the Council's 90 polling districts. Those are the figures that the consultation will be based on. The electorate forecasts were derived from ONS data, the LGBCE's methodology, and amendments for planned housing growth.
- 2.5 At the time of writing a public community presentation is being arranged for parishes, community groups and the public. This will be conducted by the LGBCE and should have been held by the time of the meeting.
- 2.6 The timetable for next steps is as follows:

3 February 2022	Officer Boundary Review workshop with LGBCE
<i>TBC February 2022</i>	Kick-Off Workshop for Members
16 February 2022	Democracy and General Purposes – Consultation Response Principles and Outline
<i>TBC February 2022</i>	<i>Member and Officer Workshops if required</i>
9 March 2022	Democracy and General Purposes – Proposed Consultation Response
13 April 2022	Full Council – Consultation Response Submission

- 2.7 The work with Members cannot begin until officers have had their workshop with the LGBCE. The date of 13 April 2022 for the submission going to Council is technically outside of the LGBCE's consultation close date (4 April 2022) but they have agreed that this is acceptable and avoids the need for another extraordinary Council.
- 2.8 The boundary review consultation is open to all to respond to and will be hosted and carried out by the LGBCE (<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/>). Any individual, community group, parish or other body can submit proposed warding arrangements to the LGBCE and those can be for all or part of the Borough. All proposals will be considered by the LGBCE against their three key considerations:
1. *Delivering electoral equality for local voters. This means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.*
 2. *Interests and identities of local communities. This means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.*

3. *Effective and convenient local government. This means ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements, including both the council size decision and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.*

- 2.9 It will take a considerable effort to achieve consensus across the piece for the Council's warding proposals. It is therefore important to note that alongside the intense work required by this timetable, individuals and groups can also make submissions where there are individual differences of opinion (either widely or on certain areas). These can be submitted independently to the LGBCE. The commission will consider all submissions it receives and will be carrying out its own site visits to the Borough before determining its proposed warding pattern.
- 2.10 Following this first consultation, the LGBCE will determine their draft recommendations for warding patterns for Maidstone Borough. A second consultation on their proposed wards will be undertaken starting on 5 July 2022 and running until September 2022 with a final set of proposals agreed by the end of the year.
- 2.11 The new warding arrangements may well have implications for polling district and parish boundaries. A Council run Community Governance Review is scheduled for 2023 to resolve both existing and new issues with current boundaries.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The committee can agree the timetable and proposed work including the intense period of work between the February and March 2022 meetings.
- 3.2 The committee can propose alternative dates or approaches, or request amendments.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed timetable and approach is recommended as the timescales are tight and the work needs to be carried out in a practical way to achieve consensus. It should be noted that as individuals and groups can also make submissions where there are individual differences of opinion (either widely or on certain areas) these can be submitted independently to the LGBCE.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The primary risk is that the Council fails to respond to the Boundary Consultation and loses the influence it would have had on it. This report

and the proposed timetable addresses that risk by setting out a practical path to achieving a decision at Council on 13 April 2022.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 This report covers the consultation that the LGBCE will be carrying out from 25 January 2022 and the later consultation in July 2022.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Officers will undertake a workshop with the LGBCE and dates for events and workshops will be booked into diaries.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.