

**Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme
Consultation Response**

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| 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

This report sets out the proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s (LGBCE) consultation on a warding scheme for the Maidstone Borough as part of the Local Government Boundary Review they are conducting.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The response to the LGBCE consultation on ward boundaries, set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, be recommended to Council for submission to the LGBCE; and
2. That delegated authority be given to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to make minor refinements to boundaries and text in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 ahead of Council.

Timetable

| Meeting | Date |
|---|---------------|
| Democracy and General Purposes Committee | 9 March 2022 |
| Council | 13 April 2022 |

Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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

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

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

- 2.1 This report is the next in a series of reports to deliver the necessary response to the LGBCE on Maidstone Borough's Local Government Boundary Review. At its last meeting the Democracy and General Purposes Committee agreed a set of principles to be used to draw up a consultation response on a new ward scheme to the LGBCE.
- 2.2 Since the last meeting two workshops and an all-day Member event have been held. The officer project team have worked to refine and amend, in accordance with feedback from Members, the initial boundary proposals shown to Democracy and General Purposes Committee on 16 February 2022.
- 2.3 In addition to the workshops and all-day event, Members have fed back individually about specific areas which has been considered and factored in and discussed at the workshops where necessary.
- 2.4 The result of this work is the proposed boundary scheme set out at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 Appendix 2 sets out the justifications for specific boundaries where there is a need to make the case to the LGBCE on why we have made certain choices.
- 2.6 Following the workshops, it was requested that an option be put before the Committee to split Vinters Park and Grove Green into a single and a two Member ward instead of the proposed combined three Member ward. However, after analysis and refining the data used this is not possible without creating an imbalance in electoral equality. This imbalance has been rectified by combining the areas, in addition to moving Mote Park from Central Maidstone to Vinters Park and Grove Green.
- 2.7 Naming remains an issue that needs to be resolved. Feedback has been received from Members directly on names and some of the wards have been changed to reflect this. However, it is important to note that even once submitted to the LGBCE the names are not set in stone. The LGBCE will decide their preferred boundaries and names in April and May and then conduct a second round of consultation in the summer on their proposals. It is recommended that the committee provide some feedback on the names now if they wish, but ultimately the naming issues will be resolved in the summer when comments can be made on the LGBCE's proposals.
- 2.8 The response outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 forms the proposed response from Council to the LGBCE, with final approval required by Full Council on 13 April 2022. By publishing them early, a month before they are

approved, it is hoped that will provide opportunity for community groups, parishes, Members and others to consider the Council's response. Whilst the commission will give the Council's response no inherent additional weight over any other, it is understood that the Council's proposals will be seen as giving a steer to others. With that in mind the Committee, and Members more generally, are asked to respond directly to the LGBCE consultation and to encourage others to do so too.

- 2.9 Communications from the Council on the LGBCE consultation and the need for groups and individuals to respond directly to the LGBCE have been ongoing, including social media, newspapers and radio. Please note that whilst the Council has an extension to 13 April 2022, the actual consultation for the public closes on 4 April 2022.
- 2.10 The Committee are also requested to provide a delegation to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to enable minor tweaks of boundaries and text. This delegation is needed in case minor flaws with the boundaries are identified post-Committee by Members or Officers, such as a boundary passing through someone's garden, or if it would be better to include a particular non-residential building in a different Ward. These changes would be consulted with a relevant (current) Ward Member where required.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 – recommend to Council that Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 be submitted to the LGBCE as the Council's consultation response.
- 3.2 Option 2 – to consider alternatives the Committee may have to these proposals as recommendations to Council.
- 3.3 Option 3 – not make a recommendation to Council such that the Council does not submit a consultation response to the LGBCE.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is preferred as these proposals are the result of significant work and consultation with Members representing the best balance of achieving the LGBCE's three objectives and what the Council wants to achieve.
- 4.2 Option 3 is definitely not recommended as this would realise the main project risk set out in the cross-cutting table.

5. RISK

See Risk Section in cross cutting table above. All risks are within the Council's risk appetite.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Significant consultation has been undertaken with both the Democracy and General Purposes Committee and Members more widely. Some of this has been covered in the introduction and background section above.
 - 6.2 This consultation on boundaries is being run by the LGBCE, not Maidstone Borough Council, and as set out in 2.8 and 2.9 all other bodies and individuals are encouraged to respond to the LGBCE directly.
 - 6.3 The LGBCE will be running a further consultation in the summer on their proposed boundaries and the Council will respond to that too, including with regard to the naming of Wards.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Committee's recommendation would be made to Council on 13 April 2022 for subsequent submission to the commission.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Proposed Ward Scheme - Maps
 - Appendix 2: Proposed Ward Scheme – Boundary Explanation
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Democracy and General Purposes Committee – 16 February 2022