

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2nd August, 2012

10.00 am

**Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 August 2012 at 10.00 am
Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone

Ask for: **Peter Sass**
Telephone: **01622 694002**

Tea/Coffee will be available 30 minutes before the meeting

Membership

Conservative: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr J F London (Vice-Chairman),
Mr A R Chell, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr M J Harrison, Mr M V Snelling
and Mrs P A V Stockell

Liberal Democrat: Mr T Prater

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

Item

- 1 Substitutes
- 2 Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda
- 3 Minutes - 1 March 2012 (Pages 1 - 2)
- 4 Boundary Reviews (Pages 3 - 118)
- 5 Kent County Council Election - May 2013 (Pages 119 - 122)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Wednesday, 25 July 2012

Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers may be inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Bewl Room, Sessions House, County Hall Maidstone on Thursday, 1 March 2012.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr J F London (Vice-Chairman), Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr T Prater and Mrs P A V Stockell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Wild, Director of Governance and Law and Mr P Sass, Head of Democratic Services

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Substitutes and Apologies

(Item 1)

The Committee noted apologies from Mr Chell, Mr Harrison and Mr Snelling.

2. Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest by Members of the Committee.

3. Minutes - 21 June 2011

(Item 3)

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record.

It was noted that a report on alternative methods of running County Council Elections was outstanding and the Director of Governance and Law undertook to prepare and submit a report to the next meeting of the Committee.

4. The Kent County Council Scale of Election Fees and Expenses

(Item 4)

(1) The Committee considered a report from the Director of Governance and Law and the Head of Democratic Services, which proposed the KCC Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2012/13.

(2) Mr Ferrin asked the Chairman to ensure that Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to express views on the two governance reviews currently being undertaken in Swale and Shepway.

Resolved: that

- (1) the proposed KCC Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2012/13 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved; and

- (2) the Head of Democratic Services be requested to submit reports to the next meeting of the Committee on the governance reviews in Swale and Shepway.

By: Graham Gibbens, Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
Geoff Wild, Director of Governance and Law

To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
2 August 2012

Subject: Boundary Reviews

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary This report provides information and invites Members' comments on various boundary reviews of district councils within KCC's area.

Introduction

1 (1) KCC has recently been notified of a number of district boundary/governance reviews being conducted in its area. Set out below are details of these reviews. The consultation period for some of these has closed but all Local Members were made aware and given the opportunity to submit their comments on the proposals direct to the relevant District/Borough Council.

Swale Boundary Review

1. (1) The Local Government Electoral Boundary Commission (LGEBC) commenced an electoral review of Swale Borough Council wards in May 2011. A consultation on council size started on 23 August 2011, followed by information gathering with Swale Borough Council on proposed ward boundaries in November 2011.

(2) On 2 April 2012, the LGEBC published its draft recommendations (**Appendix 1**) and started a consultation that ran until 8 June 2012. The final recommendations will be published on 14 August 2012.

(3) The LGEBC's draft recommendations propose that Swale Borough Council should continue to have 47 councillors, comprising five single-member, 15 two-member and four three-member wards. Three maps showing are available at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/swale-electoral-review. A copy will also be available at the meeting.

(4) The LGEBC has confirmed that this ward boundary review will have no impact on the Swale electoral divisions within Kent County Council's administrative area.

Tonbridge and Malling Electoral Boundary Review

1. (1) The LGEBC is conducting a review of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in order to improve the levels of electoral representation in the borough, which have become imbalanced since the last review undertaken in

[insert year]. Currently, the number of electors represented by the councillors in 38% of the wards varies by more than the borough 10% average; with the councillors in Kings Hill ward representing 46% more electors than the borough average.

(2) On 17 April 2012, the LGEBC published its draft recommendations (**Appendix 2**) and started a consultation that ran until 25 June 2012. Relevant local County Council Members were given the opportunity to comment on the proposals during the consultation period. Three maps showing the ward recommendations are available at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/tonbridge-and-malling-electoral-fer>. A copy will be available at the meeting.

(3) The LGEBC's draft recommendations propose that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council should continue to have 53 councillors, comprising six three Member wards, 17 two Member wards and one single Member ward.

(4) The LGEBC has confirmed that this ward boundary review will have no impact on the Tonbridge and Malling electoral divisions within Kent County Council's administrative area.

Shepway

1. (1) In November 2011, Shepway District Council established a working group of councillors to look at introducing predominantly single member wards and reducing the number of councillors. Shepway District Council currently has 46 councillors.

(2) The working group submitted its report to the Shepway District Council meeting on 21 March 2012 (attached at **Appendix 3**). In response to the report, the District Council passed the following resolutions:

“(a) To support the submission of a proposal to the LGBCE (Local Government Boundary Commission for England) incorporating the proposed new arrangements which demonstrate how the Council would operate with 38¹ member wards where necessary according to current electorate size, future electorate projections and geographical considerations.

(b) That the overall system of governance should continue to be the strong leader and cabinet model with independent overview and scrutiny.”

(3) Shepway Council has been informed by the LGBCE that it will commence the review in autumn 2012 and will aim for this to be concluded by late 2013. Relevant local County Council Members are aware of the proposals.

(4) The Committee will be kept informed of progress with this review.

¹ Amendment to working group's recommendation passed by Council

Sevenoaks Community Governance Review

(1) In November 2011, Sevenoaks District Council published terms of reference for a community governance review (formally known as a parish review) in respect of the whole of its area.

(2) The District Council's draft proposals were published in May 2012 and responses are invited by 31 July 2012. However, it has been agreed with Sevenoaks District Council that KCC can submit its response, or confirm that it does not have any comments, after this meeting. County Councillors for the Sevenoaks area have been made aware of the review and invited to submit their comments direct to the District Council or to this Committee in time for this meeting. Sevenoaks District Council will prepare final proposals by late August/early September 2012, which will be published before the end of November 2012 with the aim of them taking effect on 7 May 2015.

(3) A copy of the draft recommendations for each parish and related maps are attached as **Appendix 4**.

(4) Members are requested to consider whether they wish to submit any comments on the Sevenoaks Community Governance Review and notes that the Committee it will be kept informed of progress with this review

RECOMMENDED: The Committee is invited to:

(a) note that the consultation on the Electoral Boundary Reviews for Swale and Tonbridge and Malling areas which have now closed and that Local Members were given the opportunity to submit comments direct and that the Committee will be kept informed of progress with these reviews.

(b) note the submission made to the Local Government Electoral Boundary Commission by Shepway District Council and that this Committee will be kept informed of progress with this review.

(c) consider whether it wants to submit any comments on the Sevenoaks Community Governance Review and notes that it will be kept informed of progress with this review

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694269

Background Documents:

Swale

The full recommendations and detailed maps are available on the Commission's website at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/swale-electoral-review.

Tonbridge and Malling

The full recommendations and detailed maps are available on the Commissions website at

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/tonbridge-and-malling-electoral-fer>

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Swale Borough Council

Electoral review

April 2012

Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

Tel: 020 7664 8534

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Swale Borough Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in May 2011. This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
23 August 2011	Consultation on council size
14 November 2011	Information gathering with council on proposed ward boundaries
2 April 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
9 June 2012	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations
14 August 2012	Publication of final recommendations

Submissions received

During the Commission's public consultation on council size, we received 15 submissions. In our information gathering with the Council on proposed ward boundaries, we received four submissions. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Swale Borough Council has forecast an increase in electorate of 4.6% across the borough for the six-year period 2011–2017.

Based on the evidence submitted by the Council, we are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations for Swale.

Council size

Swale Borough Council currently has a membership of 47 councillors. At the beginning of the electoral review we met elected members and Council officers to discuss council size. We subsequently held a six-week consultation to enable members of

the public to give their views. We received 15 submissions during this consultation, with proposals ranging from 23 to 47 members. We also attended a further meeting with the leaders of the three political groups on the Council to discuss their views on council size in more detail.

All three political groups on the Council agreed that the council size should remain unchanged at 47 members. At its meeting in November 2011, the Commission concluded that sufficient evidence had been received to justify a council size of 47. It then invited the Council and its political groups to make submissions for ward boundaries based on a council size of 47.

General analysis

Swale Borough Council informed us it would assist the political groups on the Council in making their own submissions. We subsequently received four submissions – one each from representatives of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups, and a submission from the Independent member on the Council. Based on their ward boundary proposals the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups changed their view on council size, proposing it should increase to 48, while the Labour group proposed it should remain at 47.

Ultimately, the Commission has proposed a scheme based on a council size of 47. We have largely proposed to adopt the proposals of the Labour group in relation to the mainland and of the Conservative group in relation to the Isle of Sheppey. The Commission did not consider that an increase in council size to 48 was justified, as it was possible to propose a scheme which satisfactorily reflected the statutory criteria to which it must have regard under a council size of 47.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which time we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Swale Borough Council contained in this report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by **8 June 2012**. Any received after this date may not be taken into account. We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

Review Officer
Swale Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Swale Borough Council's electoral arrangements, to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Swale Borough Council inviting the submission of proposals on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Swale Borough Council in the summer of 2012.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Swale?

6 We decided to conduct this review because, based on December 2010 electorate figures, the ward of Iwade & Lower Halstow has 47% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on Swale Borough Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we therefore stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will accept comments and views until 8 June 2012. After this point, we will formulate our final recommendations which we are due to publish in the summer of 2012. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 17 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Swale Borough Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Swale is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector's vote being worth the same as another's. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between borough wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single borough ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Swale Borough Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited Swale Borough Council and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 15 submissions relating to council size and four submissions during our information gathering with the Council on ward boundaries, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

17 Swale Borough Council has forecast an increase in electorate of 4.6% across the borough for the six-year period 2011–17. Based on the evidence submitted by the Council, we are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at present and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations for Swale.

Council size

18 Swale Borough Council currently has 47 councillors elected from 25 wards. At the beginning of the electoral review we met elected members and Council officers to discuss council size. We subsequently held a six-week consultation to enable members of the public to give their views on council size.

19 During the consultation on council size we received 15 submissions with council size proposals ranging from 23 to 47. We also held a further meeting with each of the three political group leaders to discuss their views on council size in more detail.

20 All three political groups on the council agreed that the council size should remain unchanged at 47 members. Justifications for this included that the Council had a participatory system of governance, that it placed a particular emphasis on the representational role of members, and that the disparate nature of communities in Swale made it important for each area to be adequately represented. At our meeting in November 2011, we concluded that sufficient evidence had been received to justify a council size of 47. We then invited the council and its political groups to make submissions for ward boundaries based on a council size of 47.

Electoral fairness

21 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

22 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we calculate the average number of electors per councillor. The average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (96,920 in 2011 and 101,366 in 2017) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council – 47 under our draft recommendations. Therefore,

the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,062 in 2011 and 2,157 by 2017.

23 Under the draft recommendations, only one of our proposed 24 wards will have electoral variances of more than 10% from the average for the borough by 2017. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Swale.

General analysis

24 The Council agreed that it would not make a formal submission during our information gathering stage, but would support the political groups on the Council in making their own submissions. We ultimately received four submissions, one from each of the three party political groups on the Council as well as a submission from the Independent member.

25 The Conservative group on the Council made a full submission for a 48-member council. They argued that providing for an additional member would enable greater electoral equality, in particular between the Isle of Sheppey and the mainland area of the borough.

26 The Liberal Democrat group also proposed that the council size should increase to 48 on the basis this would enable minimal change to existing ward boundaries. They made a submission for the mainland area of the borough but did not make a detailed proposal for the Isle of Sheppey, though they argued it should be allocated 14 members in a 48-member council.

27 The Labour group did not revisit the issue of council size and made a full submission for a 47-member council. Their submission also allocated 14 members to the Isle of Sheppey, with one fewer councillor allocated to the Sittingbourne area than under the Conservative and Liberal Democrat group submissions.

28 The Independent member did not make a detailed submission, but stressed the importance of fair representation on the Council. She proposed that the council size should increase to 48 to reflect the increase in electorate in the Iwade and Lower Halstow area.

29 Our draft recommendations are based on a combination of the Labour group and Conservative group submissions, with amendments in specific areas to better reflect the statutory criteria.

30 Our scheme provides for a 47-member council, with five single-member wards, 15 two-member wards and four three-member wards. Only one ward is forecast to have an electorate variance of greater than 10% from the borough average by 2017.

31 We considered the arguments made by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups for a council size of 48. We noted in particular that the Isle of Sheppey would either be slightly under-represented or slightly over-represented under a council size of 47.

32 Ultimately, given the evidence received to date, we do not consider an increase in council size to be justified. We believe the scheme we have proposed satisfactorily reflects the statutory criteria under a membership of 47.

33 For the purpose of developing our draft recommendations, we have divided the borough of Swale into three areas: Sittingbourne and the surrounding rural area, Faversham and the surrounding rural area, and the Isle of Sheppey.

34 The Sittingbourne area comprises the existing borough wards of Borden, Chalkwell, Grove, Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch, Iwade & Lower Halstow, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, Roman, St Michaels, West Downs and Woodstock. It is allocated either 21 or 22 members under a 47-member council.

35 The Isle of Sheppey comprises the existing borough wards of Leysdown & Warden, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central. It is allocated either 13 or 14 members under a 47-member council.

36 The Faversham area comprises the existing borough wards of Abbey, Boughton & Courtenay, Davington Priory, East Downs, St Ann's, Teynham & Lynsted and Watling. It is allocated 12 members in a 47-member council.

Electoral arrangements

37 This section of the report details the submissions received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Swale. The following areas are considered in turn:

- Sittingbourne area (page 8)
- Isle of Sheppey (page 11)
- Faversham area (page 13)

38 In each area we have sought to reflect communication links, geographic factors and evidence of community identity received during our information gathering with Swale Borough Council. We have based our draft recommendations on the Labour group scheme in the Sittingbourne area, on the Conservative scheme on the Isle of Sheppey and on parts of both schemes in the Faversham area. In the Sittingbourne and Faversham areas we have also made minor amendments to better reflect the statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government. We welcome comments on these draft recommendations during our consultation on them.

Sittingbourne area

39 The town of Sittingbourne is the largest settlement in Swale and is its administrative centre. The town developed as a centre of the brick and paper industries and has more recently seen substantial growth in commuter housing. Neighbouring settlements such as Iwade have also seen significant population growth.

40 The Labour group scheme allocated 21 members to the Sittingbourne area, the same as its existing allocation. Owing to the electorate growth in the area, this leaves it slightly under-represented relative to the rest of the borough.

41 The Conservative and Liberal Democrat group schemes both allocated 22 members to Sittingbourne to reflect its electorate growth and to provide for improved electoral equality across the borough.

42 All three submissions agreed that the two-member Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward should remain unchanged from its existing boundaries. This ward is forecast to have 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017. We have adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

43 The single-member Iwade & Lower Halstow ward is forecast to have 69% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017. All three submissions proposed that this under-representation should be corrected by creating a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Iwade, Lower Halstow and the rural section of Bobbing parish, with the A249 as its eastern boundary. This ward is forecast to have 5% fewer electors than the borough average by 2017.

44 The rural section of Bobbing parish shares some of the character of the Iwade & Lower Halstow ward and also has good communication links with the other villages. We have therefore adopted this proposal in our draft recommendations, with a minor amendment in one area to avoid creating an unviable parish ward in Bobbing parish. This means that the proposed boundary runs to the east of the A249 in one area.

45 The district ward changes within Bobbing parish require consequential parish warding arrangements. These are described in the parish electoral arrangements section below.

46 The unparished area of Sittingbourne town currently comprises six whole wards and parts of two more wards. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat group submissions proposed schemes substantially based on existing wards, while the Labour group submission proposed a new pattern of wards in the south and west of the town.

47 The three detailed submissions agreed that the three north Sittingbourne wards of Murston, Kemsley and Milton Regis should remain mostly unchanged from their existing boundaries. They all proposed that there should be a minor amendment to the boundary between Kemsley and Milton Regis in order to improve electoral equality.

48 The Labour group submission proposed that the boundary between the two wards should run along a stream between Eleanor Drive and Celt Close and that the whole of Green Porch Close should be included in Milton Regis. The Liberal Democrat and Conservative groups proposed that the boundary should run along Attlee Way. We consider that the Labour proposal provided a stronger boundary, as it united the residential estate around Attlee Way in a single ward. We have therefore adopted this boundary as part of our draft recommendations. The proposed two-

member wards of Kemsley and Milton Regis would have 3% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively by 2017.

49 All three submissions agreed that the ward of Murston should remain unchanged. The ward combines communities on either side of the railway line in the east of the town with a single direct road access. The Labour group provided community evidence indicating that Murston is a separate community which is seen as a distinct 'village' by residents. We did not receive any contrary submissions in this area and the ward is forecast to have 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017. We have therefore adopted the unchanged two-member Murston ward as part of our draft recommendations.

50 In the south of Sittingbourne, the Labour group proposed to create a new ward named Homewood from parts of the existing Chalkwell, St Michaels and Woodstock wards. A new Sittingbourne South ward would be created from the southern part of St Michaels ward and the northern part of Woodstock ward, while an area of Grove ward known as The Meads would be joined with the northern end of Chalkwell ward and the north-western corner of St Michaels ward to form a new ward named Chalkwell & The Meads.

51 The Labour group submission also proposed that Borden ward take in parts of Grove and Woodstock wards to form a new two-member ward named Borden & Grove Park. The remainder of Woodstock ward would join West Downs ward, to be renamed Rural Sittingbourne. Finally, they proposed that the north-eastern corner of St Michaels ward should be transferred into Roman ward.

52 The Conservative group proposed that parts of the existing Grove ward be transferred to Woodstock ward and Chalkwell ward. They also proposed that a section of the existing St Michaels ward be transferred into Roman ward to improve electoral equality. Finally, they proposed a minor amendment to the existing Borden ward so that the entirety of Maylam Gardens be included in the proposed ward.

53 The Liberal Democrat group proposed that parts of the existing Grove ward should be transferred into Borden ward and Chalkwell ward. They also proposed that part of the existing Chalkwell ward should be transferred into Milton Regis ward and that the boundary between Roman and St Michaels wards be amended, though they made no specific proposal for where the boundary should be drawn.

54 Under both the Liberal Democrat and the Conservative proposals, Grove ward would be reduced to an urban area consisting of The Meads estate north of the B2006, and the Grove Park area between the railway line and the A2.

55 On analysing the Liberal Democrat and Conservative proposals, we were concerned that there was no direct road access between the two main residential areas in their proposed Grove ward. The Labour group's proposed Chalkwell & The Meads ward also appeared unsatisfactory as it combined two separate residential communities with only a single road connection.

56 Notwithstanding this, we considered the Labour group's proposals in the south of Sittingbourne provided for clearer ward boundaries and better reflected community

identities than the proposals of either the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats.

57 We therefore propose basing our draft recommendations for south Sittingbourne on the Labour group's proposals. However, we do not propose to adopt their proposed boundary in the Hearts Delight area, as transferring this area into Borden & Grove Park ward would result in the creation of an unviable parish ward in Tunstall parish. We instead propose this area should remain in West Downs ward, renamed Rural Sittingbourne.

58 We also consider that the properties comprising a ribbon development on Ruins Barn Road should be included in the urban ward of Sittingbourne South rather than the rural ward of Sittingbourne Rural as these are similar in character and contiguous with the residential properties to their north.

59 In order to resolve the issue of the inadequate ties between the Chalkwell area and The Meads in the proposal of the Labour group, we consider this ward should be divided into two single-member wards, with the boundary following the railway line along a north-east trajectory. This would result in a single-member Chalkwell ward, forecast to have 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2017, and a single-member The Meads ward, forecast to have 6% more electors than the borough average by 2017.

60 Other than these amendments, we propose to adopt the Labour group proposals for south Sittingbourne in full as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposed two-member Borden & Grove Park, Homewood, Roman and Sittingbourne South wards would have 8% more, 7% more, 8% more and 9% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2017. Our proposed single-member Rural Sittingbourne ward would have 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017.

Isle of Sheppey

61 The Isle of Sheppey is separated from the mainland by the channel known as the Swale, which also gives its name to the borough. Its principal settlements are Sheerness, Queenborough and Minster. It is connected to the mainland by two road bridges but is considered a distinct community. The south of the island predominantly consists of unpopulated marshland, with most of the population living in settlements along the north coast.

62 The Liberal Democrat group did not make a detailed submission for the Isle of Sheppey, but stated that it should be allocated 14 members in a 48-member council. The Conservative and Labour group submissions both allocated 14 members to the Isle of Sheppey.

63 The Conservative group proposed a scheme based on existing boundaries. They proposed that Eastchurch parish and the eastern end of Minster-on-Sea parish be added to the existing Leysdown & Warden ward to make a two-member ward named Eastern.

64 The Conservative group also proposed that the existing two-member wards of

Sheerness West and Sheerness East should be combined to form a three-member ward named Sheerness. The Queenborough & Halfway ward would remain unchanged, while the Sheppey Central and Minster Cliffs wards would be unchanged save for the aforementioned amendments to the boundary with the new Eastern ward.

65 Under a 48-member council as proposed by the Conservatives, a three-member Sheerness ward would have 16% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017. Under a 47-member council, this would reduce to 14% more electors.

66 The Conservative group submission justified this under-representation on the basis that the town was a 'concentrated and cohesive community', clearly bounded on all sides, with little possibility for expansion. The submission also stated that there was a 'clear community desire' to establish a town council based on the boundary of the proposed ward.

67 By contrast, the Labour group submission maintained a pattern of two two-member wards in Sheerness, improving electoral equality by adding around 600 electors to the existing Sheerness East ward, predominantly from the northern part of Halfway Houses. They justified this proposal by arguing that residents in the north of Halfway Houses used Sheerness for local services and that the area was historically known as Sheerness East.

68 The Labour group also proposed a pattern of three two-member wards in the Minster area. Their proposed Minster West ward combined part of Halfway Houses with a section of Minster-on-Sea parish west of The Broadway and Barton Hill Drive. The proposed Minster East ward would comprise the area to the south of Minster Road and Barton Hill Drive, while Minster Cliffs ward would comprise the area north of Minster Road and east of The Broadway. Cliff Gardens and the area to its east would be transferred into the proposed two-member Eastern ward, with similar boundaries to the Conservative proposal for the east of Sheppey.

69 We toured the area to test the arguments for the contrasting proposals. Overall, we were not persuaded there were sufficient grounds to justify combining parts of Sheerness with neighbouring settlements. We accept the Conservative group's argument that the town is clearly bounded in all directions and there is no distinct area of Sheerness or of any neighbouring settlement which could be combined in a ward in a way which better reflected our statutory criteria.

70 We also considered the Labour group's proposed boundaries in the Halfway Houses area would be detrimental to community identity and have not therefore adopted their proposed boundaries in the Minster area. We believe the Conservative group's proposals would provide for clearer ward boundaries as well as better reflecting community identities and communication links. We have therefore adopted the Conservative group's submission in full in the areas of Sheerness, Minster-on-Sea, Halfway Houses and Queenborough as part of our draft recommendations.

71 The three-member Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness and Sheppey Central wards are forecast to have 9% fewer, 10% fewer, 14% more and

6% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2017.

72 We have also accepted the argument of both the Conservative and Labour group submissions that the best solution for the east of Sheppey is to combine the parish of Eastchurch with the eastern end of Minster-on-Sea parish and the parishes of Leysdown & Warden to form a two-member ward. We propose this ward be named Sheppey East, as this gives the ward a clearer geographical designation in the borough. The proposed Sheppey East ward would have 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017.

73 Our proposed ward boundaries in Minster-on-Sea parish require consequential parish warding arrangements. These are discussed in the parish electoral arrangements section below.

Faversham area

74 Faversham is a market town in the east of the borough. It is connected to Sittingbourne by the A2 and is an historic centre of the brewing industry.

75 The Faversham area currently comprises four urban wards, which are together coterminous with the Faversham Town Council boundary, and three rural wards. It is allocated 12 members in a 47-member council, of which the rural area is allocated five members and Faversham town is allocated seven members.

76 All three submissions agreed that the three rural wards in this area should remain unchanged. These wards all have strong community ties and provide for good electoral equality. We have therefore adopted these three wards unchanged as part of our draft recommendations. The two-member Boughton & Courtenay and Teynham & Lynsted wards would have 2% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2017. The single-member East Downs ward would have 1% fewer electors than the borough average by 2017.

77 In the Faversham town area, all submissions were largely based on existing ward boundaries, with minor amendments to improve electoral equality.

78 All submissions agreed that the under-representation of the existing Abbey ward could be improved by transferring the area known as the Love Lane estate into Watling ward. This is a self-contained residential estate lying between two railway lines and appears to have stronger connections to its south than to its north. We have therefore adopted this boundary as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Watling ward would have 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2017.

79 The Liberal Democrat group proposed that electoral equality could be further improved by transferring an area around Stonebridge Way into Davington Priory ward from St Ann's ward. This area appears to have little relationship or communication links with Davington Priory ward so we have not adopted this proposal. The Liberal Democrat group also suggested that the boundary between St Ann's and Watling wards should follow the railway line for its entire length. This proposal would result in significant electoral inequality in both St Ann's and Watling

wards. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in our draft recommendations.

80 In the area around Faversham town centre, the Conservative group proposed the boundary between St Ann's and Abbey wards should move east so that it ran down the centre of Market Street and Preston Street, the main commercial street of Faversham.

81 The Labour group proposed a similar boundary, but retained the entirety of Preston Street in Abbey ward. They also proposed that the town centre section of West Street and the adjacent street of Water Lane should be included in St Ann's ward.

82 Having toured this area, we concur with the view of the Labour group that the entirety of Preston Street should remain within Abbey ward to avoid the division of the town centre between two wards. However, we propose that the town centre section of West Street and Water Lane should be included with the remainder of the town centre in Abbey ward.

83 The Conservative group also proposed to amend the boundary between Davington Priory and St Ann's ward in order that two properties on Brent Hill were no longer disconnected from their neighbouring residential area.

84 We accept the principle of this change, but note from information supplied by council officers that a residential development in this area is forecast to be complete by 2017. This development is located by Flood Lane next to Faversham Creek and has no direct road connection to Davington Priory ward. We therefore propose to draw the boundary so it follows the existing boundary on Brent Road, before diverting to follow the back of the allotment gardens off Brent Hill. This ensures that the Brent Hill Cottages are located in Davington Priory ward while the proposed new development remains within St Ann's ward.

85 The Conservative group also proposed that the Davington Priory ward should be renamed Priory ward on the basis that Davington Priory is the name of a private residence and also refers to an ecclesiastical parish whose boundaries bear little relation to the ward boundary. We are satisfied with these arguments and so propose in our draft recommendations that Davington Priory ward be renamed Priory ward.

86 Under our draft recommendations, Abbey ward, Priory ward and St Ann's ward would have an equal number, 5% fewer and 6% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2017.

Conclusions

87 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2011 and 2017 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2011	2017
Number of councillors	47	47
Number of wards	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,062	2,157
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation

Swale Borough Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Table B1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

88 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

89 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Swale Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

90 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Bobbing, Faversham, Minster-on-Sea and Tunstall.

91 As a result of our proposed borough ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised electoral arrangements for Bobbing parish to reflect our proposed warding arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendation

Bobbing Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Grove Park (four members), Bobbing (three members) and The Meads (two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 3b.

92 As a result of our proposed borough ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised electoral arrangements for Faversham parish to reflect our proposed electoral arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendation

Faversham Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Abbey (four members), Priory (two members), St Ann's (four members) and Watling (four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 3a.

93 As a result of our proposed borough ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised electoral arrangements for Minster-on-Sea parish to reflect our proposed electoral arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendation

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Minster East (one member), Minster North (five members) and Minster South (five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2.

94 As a result of our proposed borough ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised electoral arrangements for Tunstall parish to reflect our proposed electoral arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendation

Tunstall Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Tunstall Urban (five members) and Tunstall Rural (two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 3b.

3 What happens next?

95 There will now be a consultation period of 10 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Swale Borough Council contained in this report. We will take into account all submissions received by 8 June 2012. Any submissions received after this date may not be taken into account.

96 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Swale and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors and ward names. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during our consultation on these draft recommendations. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

97 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Swale Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

98 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations made during consultation will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Swale Borough Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

99 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, irrespective of whom they are from.

100 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

101 After the publication of our final recommendations, the review will be implemented by order subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. A draft Order – the legal

document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. When made, the draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Swale Borough Council in 2015.

102 These draft recommendations have been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. They were found to have positive impacts having regard to the underlying objective of the general equality duty; to advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Swale

103 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Swale Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed ward boundaries for Swale.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates in detail proposed ward boundaries in the north of the Isle of Sheppey.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3a** illustrates in detail proposed ward boundaries in Faversham town.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3b** illustrates in detail proposed ward boundaries in Sittingbourne town.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government

	Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward

	they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

Appendix B

Table B1: Draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2017)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Abbey	2	4,022	2,011	-2%	4,306	2,153	0%
2	Bobbing, Iwade & Lower Halstow	2	3,508	1,754	-15%	4,107	2,054	-5%
3	Borden & Grove Park	2	4,588	2,294	11%	4,667	2,334	8%
4	Boughton & Courtenay	2	4,241	2,121	3%	4,395	2,198	2%
5	Chalkwell	1	2,010	2,010	-3%	2,034	2,034	-6%
6	East Downs	1	2,137	2,137	4%	2,137	2,137	-1%
7	Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch	2	4,482	2,241	9%	4,513	2,257	5%

Table B1 (cont): Draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2017)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
8	Homewood	2	4,554	2,277	10%	4,635	2,318	7%
9	Kemsley	2	4,186	2,093	1%	4,186	2,093	-3%
10	Milton Regis	2	4,267	2,134	3%	4,285	2,143	-1%
11	Minster Cliffs	3	5,607	1,869	-9%	5,856	1,952	-9%
12	Murston	2	3,898	1,949	-5%	4,408	2,204	2%
13	Priory	1	1,923	1,923	-7%	2,059	2,059	-5%
14	Queenborough & Halfway	3	5,432	1,811	-12%	5,821	1,940	-10%
15	Roman	2	4,648	2,324	13%	4,675	2,338	8%

Table B1 (cont): Draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2017)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
16	Rural Sittingbourne	1	2,224	2,224	8%	2,246	2,246	4%
17	Sheerness	3	7,295	2,432	18%	7,365	2,455	14%
18	Sheppey Central	3	5,224	1,741	-16%	6,096	2,032	-6%
19	Sheppey East	2	3,757	1,879	-9%	3,965	1,983	-8%
20	Sittingbourne South	2	4,498	2,249	9%	4,691	2,346	9%
21	St Ann's	2	4,038	2,019	-2%	4,064	2,032	-6%
22	Teynham & Lynsted	2	4,075	2,038	-1%	4,124	2,062	-4%
23	The Meads	1	1,874	1,874	-9%	2,289	2,289	6%

Table B1 (cont): Draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2017)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Watling	2	4,432	2,216	7%	4,442	2,221	3%
Totals	47	96,920	-	-	101,366	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,062	-	-	2,157	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Swale Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

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Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Electoral review

April 2012

Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7664 8534

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Tonbridge & Malling to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in 2011.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
17 January 2012	Submission of proposals of ward patterns to the LGBCE
2 February 2012	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
17 April 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
25 June 2012	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period six years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2012. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 8.5% over this period.

A figure of 8.5% represents substantial growth over the period to 2018. This included significant growth in the Greater Tonbridge and North Eastern Tonbridge & Malling areas, focused on a few large-scale developments. We are content that the evidence regarding the completion and occupation of a majority of these developments is strong. However, in the case of the developments at Peter's Village and Preston Hall, we are minded to discount these developments at present.

Regarding Peter's Village, we were concerned that due to the lack of vehicular access and progress of development there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the projections for electoral growth will occur by 2018. Regarding Preston Hall, we considered that due to the lack of planning permission, and given that the site is still in use by the NHS and Royal British Legion, there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the projections for electoral growth will occur by 2018.

Therefore, we have discounted these developments, which in turn adjusts the electoral growth forecast to 6.9% by 2018. We are content that the forecasts for the remainder of the borough are the most accurate available at this time.

Council size

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council proposed a council size of 53, the same as the existing number. In support of this number, the Council provided evidence relating to the representational role of councillors, detailing the work members do in the community. The Council also considered their strategic management functions in support of this council size. In light of evidence received we indicated that we were minded to recommend a council size of 53.

The Council subsequently proposed a warding pattern based on 54 members. The Council considered that a council size of 54 would be the only practical way to achieve electoral equality across the borough. We investigated this proposal and considered that a council size of 53 provided the best balance between our statutory criteria, particularly in light of our conclusions reached on electorate forecasts. We therefore have adopted a council size of 53 as part of our draft recommendations.

General analysis

We have developed proposals across the borough broadly based on those of the Council. However, we have proposed modifications across the borough in order to better reflect our statutory criteria and on the basis of a council size of 53. Our proposals will provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and transport links in the borough.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by **25 June 2012**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

Review Officer
Tonbridge & Malling Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We invited Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to submit proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in late 2012.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Tonbridge & Malling?

6 We decided to conduct this review because based on the December 2010 electorate figures, 38% of the wards in the borough have 10% more or fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. One ward, Kings Hill, also has 46% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 25 June 2012. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in late 2012. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 17 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between borough wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single borough ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. Prior to the production of draft recommendations we received a submission from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 8.5% over the six-year period from 2012–18.

18 This included significant growth in the Greater Tonbridge and North Eastern Tonbridge & Malling areas, focused on a few large-scale developments. We are content that the evidence regarding the completion and occupation of a majority of these developments is strong. However, in the case of those at Peter's Village and Preston Hall, we are minded to discount the developments at present.

19 We analysed the proposed development around Peter's Village, within Wouldham parish. This development is projected to add 1,126 electors by 2018. However, we have concerns about the likelihood of this development being built and occupied by 2018. When visiting the site, we noted that there was no access to the site for construction vehicles, as a proposed bridge over the River Medway from the A228 has yet to be built. Similarly, the land on which the development is planned to occur and on which the road and bridge connecting the development are to be built is currently empty, with no sign of development. We also found very little information relating to the proposed timescales of the development and of new homes in the area on the Council or developer's websites. Considering all these factors, we are concerned that the development will not be built, and as such have discounted 1,126 electors from the 2018 electorate forecasts for Wouldham parish. We note that planning permission has been granted and work on the development is considered by the Council to have begun. However, for the reasons mentioned above, based on current evidence we are minded to discount this development from the electorate forecasts.

20 We also analysed the proposed development in the Preston Hall site, within the existing Aylesford ward, currently jointly in use by the Royal British Legion and the NHS. This development is projected to add 338 electors by 2018. This proposed development has not yet been granted outline or full planning permission by the Council, and indeed no developer has yet been appointed. Due to both this and because the site appeared to be fully functioning when we visited the area, we have discounted the 338 electors from 2018 electoral figures.

21 Therefore, with these developments discounted, the projected electorate change for the six-year period from 2012–18 is an increase of 6.9%.

22 We recognise that compiling electorate forecasts is an inexact science. We have discounted the above developments on the basis of evidence received and our

understanding of the likelihood of these developments being built and occupied by 2018. We welcome comments from the Council and those involved with these developments on their progress and likelihood of them being built and occupied by 2018.

Council size

23 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council currently has a council size of 53, elected from three single-member, 19 two-member and four three-member wards. During preliminary discussions on future council size, the Council proposed this size be retained.

24 In support of its proposal, the Council provided extensive evidence relating to the representational role of councillors, detailing the work members undertake in the community. The Council argued that the current size of committees is in line with the Council's inclusive approach, and that to reduce council size would compromise this approach and the way committees operate. We carefully considered the evidence received and were minded to agree a council size of 53. We invited the Council to submit warding proposals to us based on that council size.

25 The Council proposed a warding pattern based on 54 members. The Council considered that a council size of 54 would be the only practical way to achieve electoral equality across the borough. The Council considered that it was necessary to increase the council size by one in order to provide an extra councillor for the proposed Medway ward in Tonbridge.

26 We carefully considered the Council's argument for an increase in council size to 54. We noted that the Tonbridge area (which includes the Medway ward) is currently allocated 14 councillors under existing warding arrangements. The Council considered this should be increased to 15 members which should also result in the council size increasing by one to 54.

27 We undertook an allocation exercise of members to different parts of the borough to establish whether a council size of 54 would provide for better electoral equality across the borough. We noted that under council sizes of 53 and 54 the Tonbridge area would be allocated 15 members. Our investigations indicated that under a council size of 54 the additional councillor would actually be allocated to the north eastern area of the borough.

28 With this in mind, we are therefore not persuaded by the evidence received from the Council to support a council size of 54. We have therefore based our draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling on a council size of 53.

Electoral fairness

29 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

30 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (89,894 in 2011 and 96,075 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 53 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,696 in 2011 and 1,813 by 2018.

31 Under our draft recommendations, all of our proposed 24 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the borough by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Tonbridge & Malling.

General analysis

32 As discussed in paragraph 25, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a council size of 54 members, one more than our proposed council size of 53. This comprised one single-member ward, 16 two-member wards and seven three-member wards.

33 The Council's scheme would provide reasonable electoral equality, with two wards having greater than 10% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. Where parishes existed, the scheme used parishes and existing parish wards as the building blocks of the proposed warding patterns.

34 The Council provided some evidence of community identity and convenient and effective local government across the scheme, detailing each ward on an individual basis. The Council put their scheme out to consultation with members and interested local parties, and subsequently provided extra evidence relating to community identity in their proposed Medway ward.

35 Across the borough, we have broadly accepted the Council's schemes, subject to amendments to ensure that we provide the best balance between our statutory criteria. Our proposals also differ from those of the Council because as discussed in paragraphs 26–8, we have based our warding pattern on a council size of 53.

36 Our draft recommendations are for a pattern of one single-member ward, 17 two-member wards, and six three-member wards. We consider our draft recommendations to provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence.

37 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table B1 (on pages 23–5) and Map 1.

38 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations. We also particularly welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

39 This section of the report details the proposals we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Tonbridge & Malling. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Tonbridge (pages 9–10)
- Central Tonbridge & Malling (pages 10–11)
- North East Tonbridge & Malling (pages 12–14)

40 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table B1 on pages 23–5 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Tonbridge

41 Tonbridge comprises the unparished greater Tonbridge area in the south of the borough. It is largely urban, focused around the settlement of Tonbridge, with rural areas on its northern fringes. The electorate in this area is predicted to grow moderately, with the majority of the growth forecast occurring in the proposed Medway ward.

42 The existing wards for this area are the two-member wards of Cage Green, Castle, Judd, Medway, Trench and Vauxhall, and the three-member ward of Higham. These wards are projected to have 9% fewer, 4% more, equal to, 30% more, 18% fewer, 1% more and 14% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

43 The Council proposed a warding pattern for Tonbridge relatively similar to the current warding arrangements, with some amendments to provide for improved electoral equality. However, the Council's proposed Medway ward would still have 12% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

44 We noted that the Council's proposed warding pattern for Tonbridge crossed the railway lines in the area in several places. We initially investigated whether it was possible to configure a warding pattern for the Tonbridge area that used the railway lines as easily identifiable boundaries. We also visited the area to assess on the ground whether the railway lines presented barriers between communities. Our investigations indicated that it was not possible to use the railway lines in the area as ward boundaries as doing so would result in wards with unreasonable levels of electoral equality. In addition, from our visit to the area we considered that the railway lines did not present barriers between communities. We particularly noted the good crossing points across the railway lines in the area.

45 In light of the above we have broadly adopted the Council's warding arrangements for the Tonbridge area as part of our draft recommendations. However, we have proposed some modifications to address the issues surrounding internal ward access and electoral equality.

46 We have proposed modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Castle, Judd, Medway and Cage Green. We were concerned that the Council's proposed Judd ward did not have complete internal road access. We therefore propose transferring a small area west of Tonbridge High Street, centred on Danvers Road

and Avebury Avenue, from the proposed Castle ward to the proposed Judd ward. This maintains internal ward access within Judd ward, as the one-way system around Barden Road is such that otherwise it would not have been possible to travel from south of the railway line in Judd ward to the area in the ward north of the railway line. This would result in our Judd ward having 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

47 We also propose a further modification to the Council's proposed Castle ward. We were concerned that under the Council proposed warding pattern for Tonbridge it included a Medway ward which would have 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. We were not persuaded that this level of electoral inequality could be justified nor did we consider we had received community identity evidence to support such a variance.

48 In order to improve the electoral equality of the proposed Medway ward we propose including the area around Portman Park in our proposed Medway ward. This area was included by the Council in its proposed Castle ward. To further improve the electoral equality of our proposed Medway ward we have also decided to include the properties up to 147 Hadlow Road in our proposed Medway ward. The Council proposed these properties be included in the proposed Cage Green ward. These modifications result in our proposed wards of Medway, Castle and Cage Green having 8% fewer, 5% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively. We consider our proposed draft recommendations for these wards provide for good electoral equality and ensure internal ward access.

49 The Council proposed two-member wards for Trench and Higham. These wards would have 1% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively. We consider these wards provide for good electoral equality and reflect community identity. We have therefore decided to adopt these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

50 Our proposed draft recommendations for the Tonbridge area would create two-member Cage Green, Castle, Higham, Judd, Trench and Vauxhall wards, and a three-member Medway ward. These wards are projected to have 2% fewer, 5% fewer, 2% more, 6% more, 1% fewer, 1% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

Central Tonbridge & Malling

51 The rural area in the centre of the borough comprises the parished area from Hildenborough in the south west to Birling in the north east. Although the area is rural there are some larger settlements in the area, such as Hildenborough, Hadlow, Borough Green and East Peckham. While electorate growth across this area is mostly static, there is some growth forecast as a result of developments in the Ryarsh and Borough Green parishes.

52 The existing wards in this area are the single-member wards of Ightham; Watlingbury; and Wrotham; the two-member wards of Downs; East Peckham & Golden Green; Hadlow, Mereworth & West Peckham; and Hildenborough; and the three-member ward of Borough Green & Long Mill. These wards are projected to have 13% fewer, 11% fewer, 22% fewer, 2% fewer, 14% fewer, 5% fewer, 8% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

53 The Council proposed a warding pattern for the rural area which was based on existing parish and parish ward boundaries. The Council also proposed wards which were similar to existing wards, albeit with some amendments in order to address electoral equality.

54 The Council proposed a single-member Watlingbury ward with 10% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. The Council justified this variance on the basis of Watlingbury being a distinct community from those that surround it. The Council also proposed creating a Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted ward, a combined Hadlow & East Peckham ward, and a geographically large Downs & Mereworth ward in the centre of the borough. This ward would comprise the parishes of Addington, Birling, Mereworth, Offham, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe and West Peckham. The remaining proposed wards in this area were the same as the existing borough wards.

55 We noted that, on the whole, the Council's proposed warding pattern for this area provided for good electoral equality and wards with good transport links. However, we were quite concerned that the level of electoral equality of the Council's proposed Watlingbury ward is worsening considerably during the 2011–18. Due to this and the geographic size of the proposed Downs & Mereworth ward, we have proposed modifications to these wards.

56 We are proposing a two-member Mereworth & Watlingbury ward as part of our draft recommendations. This proposal would incorporate the parishes of Mereworth, Offham, Watlingbury, West Peckham, and the Wrotham Heath settlement in the south west of Addington parish. This ward would have 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. We consider that this proposal provides for good electoral equality and provides for coherent transport links.

57 We are also proposing creating a single-member Downs ward including the remainder of Addington parish, along with Birling and Trottiscliffe parishes and a section of Ryarsh parish north of the M20. We noted from our visit to the area that the Leybourne development in Ryarsh parish straddles the parish boundary. We have therefore sought to not split this development and include it wholly within one ward. We have decided to include this development in our proposed West Malling & Leybourne ward. This requires the parish of Ryarsh to be divided between borough wards. We have divided Ryarsh parish using the M20 as we consider this boundary is easily identifiable. Our proposed Downs ward would have 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018.

58 Across the rest of the central rural area of Tonbridge & Malling, we are adopting the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that these proposed wards provide for good electoral equality while maintaining community links.

59 Our draft recommendations for rural central Tonbridge & Malling would create a single-member Downs ward, two-member Hildenborough, Mereworth & Watlingbury, and Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted wards, and three-member Borough Green & Long Mill, and Hadlow & East Peckham wards. These wards are projected to have 6% fewer, 8% more, 8% fewer, 6% fewer, 6% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

North East Tonbridge & Malling

60 The north eastern area of the borough combines both urban and rural areas. The urban areas include the settlements of Snodland, Larkfield, Leybourne, Aylesford, Ditton, East Malling, West Malling and Kings Hill. It also includes a section of Walderslade, in the far north-east of the borough, although the majority of the Walderslade settlement lies outside Tonbridge & Malling borough. The entirety of this area is parished.

61 Electorate growth forecasts in this area are moderate although, as noted in paragraphs 17–22, we have accepted the Council's projections with amendments relating to the Peter's Village and Preston Hall developments. The majority of the remainder of development is split between the Leybourne and Snodland areas. We are content that the growth forecast in these areas represents the best estimate at this time.

62 The existing wards in this area are the two-member wards of Aylesford; Blue Bell Hill & Walderslade; Burham, Eccles & Wouldham; East Malling; Kings Hill; Larkfield North; Larkfield South; and Snodland East; and the three-member wards of Snodland West; and West Malling & Leybourne. These wards are projected to have 16% more, 10% fewer, equal to, 1% fewer, 60% more, 1% more, 13% fewer, 17% fewer, 1% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

63 The Council's proposals for this area sought to use whole parishes where possible but divided parishes where necessary in order to achieve good levels of electoral equality. We have adopted some of the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. However, we have proposed a number of modifications in order to ensure good internal communication links within wards is maintained, and also to balance electoral equality in light of the issues regarding electorate projections.

64 We are proposing amendments to the Council's proposed wards of Snodland West & Holborough Lakes and Snodland East & Ham Hill in order to provide for good internal communication links. The Council's proposal in this area would cut off the development around Holborough Lakes from the rest of the Snodland West & Holborough Lakes ward. We therefore propose moving the ward boundary so that it runs down the A228. This ensures that our Snodland West & Holborough Lakes ward has good internal communication links. This modification results in our wards of Snodland West & Holborough Lakes and Snodland East & Ham Hill having 4% fewer and 10% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

65 We are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Burham & Wouldham and Aylesford & North Downs. The reason for these modifications is because, as discussed in paragraphs 17–22, we have reservations about the electorate forecasts for this area. We therefore propose that the parish ward of Eccles be included in the Council's proposed Burham & Wouldham ward. This ward would be represented by two members and have equal to the average number of electors per councillor by 2018. We visited this area as part of our tour of the borough. We noted from our tour that the character of the Burham and Eccles communities was similar and that they shared good communication links. We

consider our proposed Burham, Eccles & Wouldham ward provides for good electoral equality and reflects community identity. We have therefore decided to adopt this ward as part of our draft recommendations.

66 As mentioned above, we are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed Aylesford & North Downs ward. We propose a two-member Aylesford North & Walderslade ward, which incorporates the communities of Walderslade, Blue Bell Hill, and the area of Aylesford north of the River Medway. We note that the areas of Walderslade and Blue Bell Hill are distant from Aylesford geographically but our investigations established that it would not be possible to place the communities of Walderslade and Blue Bell Hill in a ward alone while still achieving good levels of electoral equality. We propose that the southern boundary of this ward follow the River Medway. We noted that the Aylesford community is divided by the River Medway, M20 and a railway line. We considered that the River Medway provided the most easily identifiable boundary in this area. Our proposed Aylesford North & Walderslade ward would have 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. We have therefore decided to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

67 We are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Aylesford South, Ditton, Larkfield South and East Malling. These modifications are to ensure that all these wards have good internal communication links. We noted that under the Council's proposal a small section of Aylesford parish centred on Robson Drive would be included in the proposed Aylesford South ward. We were concerned that this road accesses entirely through Ditton ward and therefore the Council's proposal would not provide good internal communications links. We have therefore decided to include Robson Drive in our proposed Ditton ward. This would result in our Aylesford South ward having 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

68 We are also proposing further modifications to the Council's proposed Ditton ward. We were concerned that the Council's proposed Ditton ward included a section of Ditton parish north of the M20 which has no vehicular access through Ditton parish to the area to the south of the M20. We were also concerned that the western boundary of the proposed Ditton ward did not reflect communities in the area. We noted that a large development had been built which straddles the boundary between the parishes of Ditton and East Malling and Larkfield, which under the Council's proposed warding arrangements would be divided between wards.

69 To the north, we propose moving the section of Ditton parish north of the M20 and a section of the existing Larkfield North ward to the east of New Hythe Lane into our proposed Larkfield South ward. This modification ensures good internal communication links between the northern and southern parts of this ward. We also propose that the development which straddles the parish boundaries of Ditton and East Malling and Larkfield should not be split between wards. We toured the area around Blackthorn Drive, Bell Lane, Oak Drive and Fernleigh Rise and considered it should be included in our proposed Larkfield South ward. This ensures that this residential estate is not split between borough wards. This would result in our Ditton ward having 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

70 We also propose a minor modification between the wards of Larkfield South and East Malling. We consider that the boundary should run completely along London Road rather than departing to the southern side behind backs of properties as

proposed by the Council. We consider that London Road provides for an easily identifiable boundary. Our proposed Larkfield South and East Malling wards would have 4% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

71 Our draft recommendations for north eastern Tonbridge & Malling would create two-member wards of: Aylesford North & Walderslade; Aylesford South; Burham, Eccles & Wouldham; Ditton; East Malling; Larkfield North; Larkfield South; and Snodland East & Ham Hill; and three-member wards of: Kings Hill; West Malling & Leybourne and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes. These wards are projected to have 8% more, 6% fewer, equal to, 6% fewer, 1% more, 4% fewer, 4% more, 10% fewer, 7% more, 9% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

Conclusions

72 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2011 and 2018 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2011	2018
Number of councillors	53	53
Number of electoral wards	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,696	1,813
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council should comprise 53 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Table B1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

73 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

74 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

75 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Addington, Aylesford, Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield, Ryarsh and Snodland.

76 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Addington parish.

Draft recommendation

Addington Parish Council should return seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Addington East (returning four members) and Addington West (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

77 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Aylesford parish.

Draft recommendation

Aylesford Parish Council should return 20 parish councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Aylesford North (returning two members), Aylesford Robson Drive (returning one member), Aylesford South (returning seven members), Blue Bell Hill (returning two members), Eccles (returning three members) and Walderslade (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

78 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Ditton parish.

Draft recommendation

Ditton Parish Council should return 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Ditton North (returning two members) and Ditton South (returning 11 members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

79 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for East Malling and Larkfield parish.

Draft recommendation

East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council should return 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: East Malling (returning six members), Larkfield North (returning five members), and Larkfield South (returning six members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

80 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Ryarsh parish.

Draft recommendation

Ryarsh Parish Council should return seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Ryarsh North (returning four members) and Ryarsh South (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

81 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Snodland parish.

Draft recommendation

Snodland Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Snodland East & Ham Hill (returning six members) and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes (returning nine members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

3 What happens next?

82 There will now be a consultation period of 10 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 25 June 2012. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

83 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during the consultation. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

84 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Tonbridge & Malling Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.lgbce.org.uk or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk

85 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all the representations received will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

86 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

87 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

88 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in 2015.

89 This report has been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling

90 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2a** illustrates the proposed wards in the north east of Tonbridge & Malling.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2b** illustrates the proposed wards in Addington and Ryarsh.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2c** illustrates the proposed wards in Kings Hill.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in the south of Tonbridge & Malling.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Commission for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

Appendix B

Table B1: Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aylesford North & Walderslade	2	3,853	1,927	14%	3,901	1,951	8%
2	Aylesford South	2	3,066	1,533	-10%	3,411	1,706	-6%
3	Borough Green & Long Mill	3	5,317	1,772	4%	5,754	1,918	6%
4	Burham, Eccles & Wouldham	2	3,440	1,720	1%	3,629	1,815	0%
5	Cage Green	2	3,534	1,767	4%	3,546	1,773	-2%
6	Castle	2	3,312	1,656	-2%	3,442	1,721	-5%
7	Ditton	2	3,369	1,685	-1%	3,392	1,696	-6%
8	Downs	1	1,476	1,476	-13%	1,701	1,701	-6%
9	East Malling	2	3,561	1,781	5%	3,651	1,826	1%
10	Hadlow & East Peckham	3	5,694	1,898	12%	5,721	1,907	5%

Table B1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Higham	2	3,683	1,842	9%	3,702	1,851	2%
12	Hildenborough	2	3,839	1,920	13%	3,907	1,954	8%
13	Judd	2	3,452	1,726	2%	3,832	1,916	6%
14	Kings Hill	3	4,940	1,647	-3%	5,815	1,938	7%
15	Larkfield North	2	3,488	1,744	3%	3,495	1,748	-4%
16	Larkfield South	2	3,729	1,865	10%	3,787	1,894	4%
17	Medway	3	4,073	1,358	-20%	4,990	1,663	-8%
18	Mereworth & Watlington	2	3,288	1,644	-3%	3,319	1,660	-8%
19	Snodland East & Ham Hill	2	3,178	1,589	-6%	3,264	1,632	-10%
20	Snodland West & Holborough Lakes	3	4,293	1,431	-16%	5,234	1,745	-4%
21	Trench	2	3,575	1,788	5%	3,579	1,790	-1%
22	Vauxhall	2	3,462	1,731	2%	3,654	1,827	1%

Table B1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 West Malling & Leybourne	3	4,715	1,572	-7%	5,924	1,975	9%
24 Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted	2	3,343	1,672	-1%	3,425	1,713	-6%
Totals	53	89,894	-	-	96,075	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,696	-	-	1,813	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

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This report will be made public on 13 March 2012

Folkestone

Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



www.shepway.gov.uk

Report number **A/11/24**

To: Council
Date: 21 March 2012
Status: Non-executive decision
Chief Executive: Alistair Stewart
Cabinet Member: Councillor Robert Bliss, Leader of the Council

Subject: Report of the Electoral Review Working Group

Summary: This report outlines the conclusions of the Electoral Review Working Group and sets out the proposed revised decision making arrangements that arise from the recommendations.

Reason for recommendations:

Council is invited to adopt the proposals contained in this report to form the basis of the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and to agree in principle the new ways of working if the LGBCE are agreeable to the proposals for a reduction in the number of councillors.

Recommendations:

1. To receive and note report A/11/24.
2. To support the submission of a proposal to the LGBCE incorporating the proposed new arrangements which demonstrate how the Council would operate with 30 members that is predominantly two member wards with flexibility to have single member wards where necessary according to current electorate size, future electorate projections and geographic considerations;
3. That the overall system of governance should continue to be the strong leader and cabinet model with independent overview and scrutiny;
4. To agree to implement the proposals contained in section 5 of this report, with effect from the 2012-13 municipal year namely:
 - a. That Audit and Compliance Committee be renamed Audit and Standards Committee with a membership of five;
 - b. That Personnel and Appointments Committee be renamed Personnel Committee with a membership of five.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council considered the Leader's report on electoral review at its meeting on 23 November 2011, Report A/11/12 – (copy attached as Appendix 1) and resolved as follows:

1. To receive and note report A/11/12.
2. To commission from the informal group of councillors mentioned in paragraph 4.2 a preparatory report, research and consultation to look at introducing predominantly single member wards and reducing the number of councillors.
3. That the report's conclusions be submitted to a meeting of the General Purposes Committee before being reported to the next meeting of the Council on 22 February 2012.

- 1.2 The Electoral Review Working Group, which comprises Councillors Robert Bliss, David Monk, Alan Clifton-Holt, Keren Belcourt, Hugh Barker and George Bunting, met on four occasions: 14 December 2011, 17 January 2012, 6 February 2012 and 5 March 2012. This report summarises the evidence gathered, the options considered and discussed, and presents the recommendations of the working group. This report was submitted in draft form to the General Purposes Committee on 21 February 2012 and to the Constitutional Advisory Committee on 5 March 2012.

- 1.3 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) expect authorities to demonstrate that their proposals are realistic and effective. The early adoption of some of these proposals would on the one hand give valuable experience for the authority and its members and on the other hand would demonstrate a deep commitment to the new arrangements. All early adoption matters have been referred to the Constitutional Arrangements Committee for consideration.

2. LGBCE FACTORS

- 2.1 The LGBCE ask local authorities to consider the following four factors when making a proposal on council size:

- The decision making process – what decisions, taken where, and how is it managed?
- Quasi-judicial processes – i.e. planning and licensing – what is the workload and how is it managed?
- The scrutiny process – what is scrutinised and how is the total scrutiny workload managed?
- The representative role of the elected member.

- 2.2 These factors were considered at the first meeting of the working group, where it was agreed that officers would undertake research to analyse likely workloads for a council with fewer councillors. The working group were invited at that stage to indicate the least number of members that would be a viable number for Shepway. The Group considered the range of 24-30 members and took the view that, pending research and data, that

a council size of 28-30 was likely to be the smallest viable option, preferably being 30.

3 RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

- 3.1 Following the first meeting, officers undertook some desktop research in an attempt to identify potential authorities to investigate further. This included known efficient councils and also evidence gathered via a democratic services network. The summary of that information is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 3.2 Based on this data officers undertook a visit to Eastbourne Borough Council (a council with 27 members) to discuss how their structure operated and to see whether lessons could be learned for the Shepway review. There are many similarities between the two authorities as well as significant differences as can be summarised below.

Similarities and differences between Shepway and Eastbourne	
Shepway District Council	Eastbourne Borough Council
Mixture of urban and rural areas	Largely urban
Almost entire area served by Town and Parish Councils	No parish councils exist
Population: 101,000 Electorate: 81,000	Population: 90,000 Electorate: 73,000
There are 22 wards with one, two or three members per ward	There are nine wards each with three members
Six county divisions	Nine county divisions, with boundaries matching ward boundaries

- 3.3 The following bullet points summarise the key elements of the Eastbourne democratic structures as they are currently operated:
- There is a Council of 27 councillors elected all out every 4 years: the Council meets five times a year in addition to the annual meeting
 - The current political balance is 15 Liberal Democrats and 12 Conservative, with a tendency for control to swing between the two political parties
 - There is a Cabinet of 6: the portfolios have been historically departmental but have more recently been moving towards a thematic structure based around established corporate priorities. The Cabinet meets 8 times per year.

- There is a single scrutiny (O&S) committee of 7 members (with four nominated substitutes) which meets 6 times per year. It considers standardised quarterly reports on performance issues, including financial reports, along with reports from sub-groups (see below). The chairman and vice-chairman are from the opposition group but the committee reflects proportional balance.
- The scrutiny committee sets up a number of small task and finish groups (typically comprising two councillors, one from each party, plus an officer) which meet in private and report back to scrutiny with their findings. These groups normally examine identified corporate projects.
- Their Development Control Committee comprises 8 members and meets every 4 weeks with similar levels of delegation to SDC.
- They have an Audit Committee of 6 members that meets quarterly.
- Their Licensing Committee has 13 members and meets 4 times per year. As with Shepway the majority of business is undertaken by the licensing sub-committees.
- They have a Standards Committee similar to SDC, which is the subject of review in the light of recent legislative change.
- They are evolving a system of neighbourhood forums – currently six but with the expectation that there will be one for each of the nine wards

3.4 Whilst the working group did not consider that the Eastbourne model should act as a blueprint for Shepway, the members did believe that there were some interesting lessons to be learned in terms of overall size and efficiency; especially in the use of councillors' time.

3.5 The working group identified at its first meeting that probably the single biggest area of committee activity for many district councillors was the work of the Development Control Committee. The working group was also concerned to investigate different models of delegation both within the council and also beyond, ie to town and parish councils. Officers reviewed the position and submitted the following evidence to the second meeting of the working group:

- A smaller Development Control Committee of eight members would be workable and is deemed highly preferable.
- A smaller committee provided the opportunity to have a greater "professionalisation" of members.
- Continuous development and training of members could be provided along the lines of licensing committee.
- If any delegation of planning is made to town/parish councils, then a detailed assessment of financial implications and logistics would be required to look at officer time, duties and appeals etc. Based on the

current number of planning applications, it is not considered a preferred option at present.

- The Localism Act will introduce significant impact on our work in this area and we are awaiting the detailed guidance from government before assessing the impact and devolution to communities involved.
- A three weekly cycle is preferred to maintain our 8 week target achievement.
- 93-94% of all decisions are taken under delegated authority which was in the middle of the range of delegated decisions by authorities in Kent. Most authorities operated similar levels of delegation and there didn't seem much scope or desire for further internal delegation.

3.6 The third area of research undertaken was a survey of councillors. This was undertaken online between 4-31 January 2012. The full results are attached as appendix 3 but the key findings can be summarised as follows:

- The overall response to the survey was 65.2%
- Of the respondents, 40% identified themselves as being on cabinet or chair of a committee and 60% were backbenchers
- On average, councillors in non cabinet or chair positions spend about 8 hours per week on council business whereas those holding cabinet or chairman positions spend an average of 16 hours per week on council business.
- Most councillors wish to spend more time with their constituents or with their local communities.
- The top three priorities for additional support, budgets permitting, were delegated ward budgets (75%), administrative support (43%), paperless committees (40%) and facilities for surgeries (36%).
- About two-thirds of councillors would prefer to have multi member wards or a mix of single member and multi member wards.

3.7 The working group had previously considered and dismissed the idea of returning to a committee system of governance, principally because the direct provision of services had reduced in number which in turn would have resulted in the need for just one or two committees. The group did not perceive an advantage in such an option nor did it consider the option of an executive mayor. At the request of the General Purposes Committee the working group examined further evidence in relation to alternative forms of democratic decision making, including the committee system and also the directly elected mayor model.

- 3.8 Prior to the Localism Act 2011 only authorities with populations of less than 85,000 could adopt a traditional committee system of governance. The Localism Act allows the following options in terms of decision making structures:-
- (a) A leader and cabinet executive;
 - (b) A mayor and cabinet executive;
 - (c) A committee system;
 - (d) Other arrangements approved by the Secretary of State.
- 3.9 The Act is clear that a local authority with committee based governance arrangements may appoint one or more committees as the authority's overview and scrutiny committee or committees. There is a specific requirement to review and scrutinise flood risk management functions and to carry out scrutiny of health and crime and disorder. The Secretary of State has power to make regulations about the function, composition and procedure for overview and scrutiny committees in a committee system. Regulations are not required in order to proceed with a change in governance arrangements.
- 3.10 The Secretary of State has power to approve alternative forms of governance arrangement on request from local authorities, provided that they demonstrate that the proposed arrangements would be an improvement on the current arrangements, that they would ensure efficient, transparent and accountable decision making and that they would be appropriate for all local authorities, or a particular type of local authority.
- 3.11 The debate in the House of Lords did focus on the role of overview and scrutiny committees in a committee system and there was cross party support for retaining a scrutiny role to both hold decision makers to account and to look forward at policy development. Baroness Hanham confirmed, "Nothing in these arrangements would stop a local authority from having scrutiny committees. If it has a committee system, it can have a scrutiny system running alongside those arrangements. Nothing here would put those arrangements under threat."
- 3.12 There are currently no authorities operating a committee system under the Localism Act provisions as yet, but a few do exist under the previous provisions. The vast majority are to be found in Scotland and Northern Ireland and whilst it is true that Scottish and Northern Ireland law is different, it was possible to identify some comparative information. The evidence discussed by the working group found that committee systems would result in the demand for similar numbers and types of meetings that exist under the current cabinet/scrutiny arrangements.
- 3.13 Having regard to the experience of other authorities and also having regard to the local circumstances in Shepway, if a committee structure were adopted, the working group agreed it would probably be along the following lines:
- Full Council
 - Policy and Resources Committee

- Development Control Committee
 - Licensing Committee (with sub-committees)
 - New standards arrangements in accordance with Localism Act
- 3.14 In this model, the group found that the Policy and Resources Committee could be a large and cumbersome body charged with considering and scrutinising all of the executive decisions. It would also have needed to meet frequently in order to deal with this workload.
- 3.15 Many academics have reviewed the value and benefit of different forms of governance. One of the more recent evaluations was undertaken by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and this was considered in full by the working group. In looking at this, the group considered how these, and other policy dimensions, are dealt with locally in Shepway and sought to establish whether:
- A committee system is likely to be more efficient?
 - A committee system is likely to be more accountable?
 - The financial and organisational cost of any transition from one system to another?
 - Do the public care what system of democratic decision making exists?
- 3.16 The final question was posed because in the past the public have shown little interest in the forms of governance adopted by the Council. For example, in 2010 the Council was required to consult on forms of governance. On that occasion only four people responded.
- 3.17 The Council could consider moving to a directly elected Mayor model, however a mayoral option can only be adopted by way of a binding referendum, through the following ways:
- triggered by the council following consultation with the public,
 - following a petition received and signed by five per cent of the electorate,
 - or in certain circumstances by the Secretary of State.
- 3.18 There is no evidence that there is an appetite for such an arrangement in Shepway and on 31 January 2002, it will be recalled that a referendum on whether to have a directly elected mayor was held in Shepway. The turnout was 36% with 11,357 (44%) voting for the proposal with 14,438 (56%) against. Across the whole of England the option has been rarely taken up. To do so would require the holding of a referendum which would be costly – the Government suggest that the cost of holding a referendum for a district council would be in the region of £140,000.

4. OPTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 After reviewing that evidence on the best model of governance, the working group considered that the strong leader model with cabinet and separate scrutiny was appropriate to a district council like Shepway.

- 4.2 In considering and debating the evidence the working group took a view about overall council size. Members were not convinced that it would be viable to run Shepway District Council with fewer than 30 councillors, all of whom the group considered, should have clear and substantial roles in addition to their ward based constituency role.
- 4.3 The working group then considered whether they supported the return to a traditional committee structure which is now permitted by the Localism Act. The group took the pragmatic view, that if there was a return to such a structure there would be no justification to supporting a large number of committees given the fact that many services in Shepway are out sourced. In reality a modern committee structure for an efficient district council would require one or two service committees at most. Whilst there was some support for examining such a model the clear majority view was that an improved executive model made most sense at this time.
- 4.3 The working group then went on to consider the number and type of committees that an efficient democratic structure would need and took the view that a structure along the lines of that set out in Appendix 3 would meet the needs of the council. In summary the suggested structure can be summarised as follows:

Body/function	Number of councillors	Frequency of meetings	Comments
Council	30	4 plus annual meeting	To continue in much the same vein as present
Cabinet	6 [maximum but at Leader's discretion]	Monthly	Portfolios to be determined by Leader
Overview and Scrutiny	8	6	Overarching issues only including financial and performance review
Task and finish groups	2 per group	Ad hoc	Informal short life groups that dig deep into issues with relevant service heads. Probably 3-5 of these groups in any one year
Development Control Committee	8	3 weekly	To have the Cabinet Member with the planning portfolio on the standing membership and no other Cabinet members unless in a substitute capacity.

Licensing Committee and sub-committees	10 (legal minimum requirement)	Full committee up to 2 meetings pa; sub-committee as and when needed	Apart from size on main committee the current arrangements would continue
Audit and Standards Committee	5	Quarterly	Addition of new regime of standards responsibilities to current audit and compliance terms of reference.
Personnel Committee	5	Quarterly	Non executive and organisational responsibilities including new remuneration policy responsibilities. No more than 3 cabinet members allowed to serve.

4.4 These pilot proposals could provide substantial roles as follows:

- 3 - 10 as the number of Cabinet members as allocated by the Leader
- 1 Chairman of the Council
- 1 Vice-Chairman of Council
- 8 Overview and Scrutiny Committee members
- 7 Development Control members (8th member being from Cabinet)
- 6 of the 10 Licensing Committee members being “specialists” and providing core membership of sub-committees
- 5 members of the Audit and Standards Committee
- 2 members of the Personnel Committee (the other 3 members being cabinet members)

Total posts available (excluding cabinet posts) equates to 30 places

Further posts include:

- 5 members of Housing Appeals Committee (not met since 2007)
- 5 members of Constitutional Advisory Committee
- 5 members of Grants Advisory Committee
- 5 [may need to be reduced] members of Employment Appeals Sub-Committee
- 6 members of Joint Transportation Board
- 3 members of Joint Staff Consultative Forum
- 2 members on East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee
- 3 members on East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee

- 4.5 In reaching their conclusions about the size of future committees the working group were aware that in addition to their ward based work with constituents, all councillors need to have a clear significant role and specialism within the council whether that be executive, regulatory, scrutiny or ceremonial. Generally speaking the Group were of the view that cabinet members should not dominate other democratic bodies which would mean that, for example, the Development Control Committee would normally have a maximum of one cabinet member in its membership. The above table demonstrates that with minimal overlap there would be a significant role for 30 councillors to perform.
- 4.6 The Working Group were aware that the Localism Act would generate further forms of democratic responsibility, but at this time it was not clear whether such responsibilities would fall on the district council to coordinate, or to the town and parish councils. Accordingly this proposal leaves that question open, but in general terms the group believe that a combination of 30 district councillors and town and parish councillors created a sufficient pool of democratically elected representatives to deliver on the aims of the Localism Act.
- 4.7 In terms of the councillors' representative role a council of 30 members would mean that each councillor would have an average of around 2,700 constituents. The working group considered that councillors could undertake their ward work with this number of constituents.
- 4.8 The Electoral Review Working Group therefore recommends to Council that, for the purposes of the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, the structure outlined in Appendix 4 be adopted as a future objective for this authority.

5. SUGGESTED CHANGES FOR THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL YEAR

- 5.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) expect authorities to demonstrate that their proposals are realistic and effective. Consideration will need to be given about possible early adoption, perhaps in a pilot form, of some of these proposals which would on the one hand give valuable experience for the authority and its members and on the other hand would demonstrate a deep commitment to the new arrangements.
- 5.2 However, some of the proposals need to be implemented for legal reasons at the earliest possible date. The following is therefore suggested to come into effect following the Council AGM in May 2012:

5.3 Audit and Standards Committee

- 5.3.1 Chapter 7 of The Localism Act 2011 radically overhauls the standards regime. Under the standards provisions of the Act, it is the government's intention to effect the abolition of the "Standards Board Regime" through the Localism Act 2011. This means that, under the standards provisions of the Act, Standards for England is to be abolished and the government has confirmed that this will take effect on the 31 March 2012.

- 5.3.2 There are likely to be transitional provisions ending on 1 July 2012, which means that any changes would not come about until this date and the existing structure is maintained until then.
- 5.3.3 The parish councils, at the meeting of the Shepway District and Parish Councils Joint Committee on the 15 December 2011 noted that the parishes would come under the new arrangements being prepared by the district council.
- 5.3.4 The Audit and Compliance Committee of the council, which meets three times per year, is currently responsible for reviewing financial statements, the authority's assurance statement, external auditor's reports, the work of internal audit, corporate governance arrangements and the Council's whistleblowing policy amongst its main functions. It is therefore proposed to establish a new committee entitled Audit and Standards to cover the previous work of Audit and Compliance Committee and the new standards regime. This new committee, made up of 5 members, will take effect from the May 2012 Council AGM with the standards element coming into effect following the transitional arrangements in 2012.

5.4 Personnel Committee

- 5.4.1 Section 40 of the Localism Act 2011 sets out new duties for the Council to prepare and agree pay policy statements. This responsibility falls in line with the existing terms of reference of the existing Personnel and Appointments Committee. The working group agreed with the suggestion of the Constitutional Advisory Committee that the name of the new committee could be simplified and there recommends its renaming as Personnel Committee. It is proposed that this takes effect from the Council AGM in May 2012 and has a membership of 5.

6. NEW WAYS OF WORKING

- 6.1 In addition the LGBCE expect councils to demonstrate how councillors will develop and deliver their representative role. Councillors might agree that a special working group be set up to look at this and their training needs. Before reporting to Cabinet, a report would be made to General Purposes Committee.
- 6.2 A further outstanding issue is the emergence of neighbourhood forums or equivalent. The full details of proposals contained within Localism Act are still to be developed, but there is no doubt that the neighbourhood planning proposals and other proposals for enhancing the role of the community will add to the role of district councillors and/or parish and town councillors.
- 6.3 Ward budgets: councillors have indicated in the survey that (resources permitting), they would wish to have ward budgets within their control. Officers will investigate the required financial implications and proper audit checks and the Leader will report back at a later date.

7. WARD PROPOSALS

7.1 At its meeting on 6 February 2012 the Working Group considered how 30 councillors would represent the District. The Working Group acknowledged that detailed boundary proposals would emerge from the review undertaken by the LGBCE but were keen to ensure any proposals for a reduction in councillors would be feasible and not lead to too large a geographical area. The Working Group noted that parish boundaries were generally regarded by the LGBCE as the building blocks for district council ward boundaries. The Working Group also noted that although the underlying assumption from the LGBCE was that single member wards would be predominant in a new structure, some councillors had indicated that they believed single member wards were not appropriate in all cases. Two member wards would be most necessary in the more built up areas whilst single member wards would cover small areas in terms of electorate much the same as they do at the moment. On balance, and having regard to the opinion of the General Purposes Committee, the working group agree that the new structure should, however, be based on predominantly two member wards.

7.2 Attached at Appendix 5 is a map which shows the District divided into four broad areas of:

- The Marsh
- Folkestone and Sandgate
- Hythe and north Hythe rural
- North Downs

Areas	Number of Councillors
Area 1 - current ward boundaries of Dymchurch and St Mary's Bay, Lydd, New Romney Coast, New Romney Town and Romney Marsh	6
Area 2 - current ward boundaries of Folkestone Cheriton, Folkestone East, Folkestone Foord, Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone Harvey Central, Folkestone Harvey West, Folkestone Morehall, Folkestone Park and Folkestone Sandgate	14
Area 3 - current ward boundaries of Hythe Central, Hythe East, Hythe West, Lympne and Stanford and Tolsford	6
Area 4 - current ward boundaries of Elham and Stelling Minnis, North Downs East and North Downs West	4

- Area 1, the Marsh, which would be represented by 6 councillors
- Area 2, Folkestone, which would be represented by 14 councillors
- Area 3, Hythe and north Hythe rural, which would be represented by 6 councillors
- Area 4, the North Downs, which would be represented by 4 councillors

- 7.3 Appendix 5 gives the breakdown of each existing ward and the total of all of those wards within the four broad areas in Shepway. Given the total number of seats being 30, the Sainte-Laguë method of distribution is used, which is how seats are distributed regionally in the UK for European Parliament and Westminster parliamentary boundary review purposes. This gives the number of seats for each area.
- 7.4 The figures used in the breakdown of seats to areas is intended to only be indicative and does not represent the sum total of the electorate or the actual four separate areas to be considered. It is intended as a guide and also does not take into account the five year growth figures, as per proposed planning in each of the wards which will be considered by the LGBCE, and therefore should be treated as a guide at this stage.
- 7.5 The parish council and meeting boundaries for the same four areas are shown on the map in Appendix 6. The new ward areas would not necessarily be based on existing district ward boundaries but would, wherever possible, not transcend different communities or existing parish boundaries which would be used as the building blocks for the new ward areas. Appendix 8 gives the number of electors in each parish area.

8. LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND OTHER POLICY MATTERS

8.1 Legal officer's comments (PJW)

Further Electoral Reviews are subject to the procedures and guidance produced by the Local Government Boundary Commission as established under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The Commission has the power to commence an electoral review and implement the outcome by Statutory Instrument or order on the local authority area. The council will be required to comply with any request made by the LGBCE to support the review and to provide the necessary advice and support to their process.

The Council has a duty to comply with the provisions of the Local Government Acts (as amended) and associated legislation in providing effective and appropriate governance arrangements.

8.2 Finance officer's comments (SH)

Further to discussions with the author of the report, there will be a cost in respect of the boundary review for which no budget exists and there is currently no allowance for it within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This cost will occur regardless of the decision taken, however agreement to the recommendations may require some of the costs to be met in the 2012/13 financial year.

Savings will accrue on an ongoing basis following elections in 2015 but are impossible to quantify at this stage as they are dependent upon the outcome of the deliberations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

8.3 Diversities and equalities Implications (DJ)

All aspects of diversity and equality are covered within the report.

9. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising from this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Dylan Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Telephone: 01303 853283
E-mail: dylan.jeffrey@shepway.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report

Electoral Reviews: technical guidance (The Local Government Boundary Commission)

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Report A/11/12 - Electoral review of the Council
- Appendix 2: Table of Council Size
- Appendix 3: results of Councillors Survey
- Appendix 4: Proposed Committee Structure
- Appendix 5: Indicative ward Boundaries
- Appendix 6: Existing parish Boundaries
- Appendix 7: Table of current ward sizes
- Appendix 8: Table of current parish sizes

This report will be made public on 15 November 2011

APPENDIX 1

Folkestone

Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



Report number **A/11/12**

To:	Council
Date:	23 November 2011
Status:	Report of the Leader of the Council
Subject:	Electoral review of the Council

Summary: This report presents the rationale for seeking an electoral review of the council and sets out what the council should seek to achieve through it.

Reasons for recommendations:

Council is asked to agree the recommendations set out below to set in train the process for request that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England conduct an electoral review of the council.

Recommendations:

1. To receive and note report A/11/12.
2. To commission from the informal group of councillors mentioned in paragraph 4.2 a preparatory report, research and consultation to look at introducing predominately single member wards and reducing the number of councillors.
3. That the report's conclusions be submitted to the next meeting of the Council on 22 February 2011.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is my report as the Leader of the Council on the electoral review of the council that will be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) during the lifetime of this current council.
- 1.2 I am submitting this report not primarily as the executive leader responsible for the discharge and allocation of the executive functions of the council but as the leader of the council responsible for helping determine its future shape.
- 1.3 I have not, of course, acted in isolation and I have discussed the ideas set out in this report with my fellow councillors. In particular I discussed the proposals with Councillors Rory Love, Alan Clifton – Holt, David Monk, Malcolm Dearden, Keren Belcourt, Stuart Peall, Russell Tillson, Hugh Barker, Richard Pascoe, George Bunting, Peter Monk, Peter Gane and David Godfrey who are in broad agreement with the proposals.

2. THE FORTHCOMING ELECTORAL REVIEW

- 2.1 The LGBCE is responsible for, amongst other things, reviewing the electoral arrangements of local authorities; the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards and the number of councillors to be elected to each.
- 2.2 The last full local government electoral review of Shepway, conducted by the LGBCE, took place in 2000 and was published on 8 May 2001. This formed part of a periodic electoral review cycle for Kent which occurred approximately every ten years.
- 2.3 The 2001 full electoral review recommended that the number of wards was reduced from 25 to 22 and the number of councillors was reduced from 56 to 46. In addition new boundaries were created and new parish wards and changes to the number of councillors were also introduced for some parish councils such as Lympne.
- 2.4 In 2004, the rules were amended and the periodic electoral review was abolished. However new criteria were introduced for requiring a full electoral review in circumstances where:
 - More than 30% of a council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio (in Shepway 30% is 7 wards) and/or
 - One or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30% and
 - The imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate with a reasonable period.
- 2.5 In addition, a council may request a full electoral review where they are seeking to:

- Have wards represented by two or three members reduced to single member wards and/or
 - Change the number of elected councillors and/or
 - Change electoral cycles e.g. from all out every four years to half or thirds elections and
 - See better electoral parity
- 2.6 The new electoral register figures will be published on 1 December 2011. Based on early projections, Shepway will have at least one ward with an electoral imbalance of more than 30% and will have 6-11 wards with an imbalance of more than 10%.
- 2.7 This means we will be subject of full electoral review by the LGBCE. Based on the current LGBCE projected timetable of work and ongoing discussions with the commissioner's office, the earliest a review would occur in Shepway would be 2013 for completion in 2014. This could potentially lead to a very short timescale for implementation of new wards, parish council areas and selection of candidates for elections due in 2015.
- 2.8 However, if the council made a submission based on the criteria for council's requests for a review, then this coupled with the triggers already achieved, could result in Shepway being moved up the list to have a review commenced sometime in 2012 for implementation in 2013. This would enable plenty of time for new arrangements to be in place for the 2015 elections.
- 2.9 It is my view that the council should request a review and be clear on what the council wants from the review. I firmly believe that we should set the agenda rather than have it forced on us.

3. OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 I think that the council should seek the following outcomes from any review. The proposals will be worked up by a group of members and will be the subject to the statutory procedures.
- 3.2 The outcomes that the council should seek are:-
- Predominately single member wards throughout the district and
 - A reduction in the number of elected members to 24 – 30.
- 3.3 Turning to the first issue. I consider that having a single member for each ward helps the electorate understand and engage with the council rather than having, as is the case now in some wards having two or three district councillors. Single member wards avoid potential confusion and helps place the ward member at the centre of his or her community. Although I recognise that the demographics and the geography of single member wards may result in two member wards.

- 3.4 On the second matter I take the view that it is right now for the council to seek a reduction in the council membership. The council now has had more than ten years' experience of operating the cabinet style of administration. The cabinet system inevitably means that more decisions are concentrated in fewer councillors and yet we operate with only ten fewer councillors than we did when the council operated the committee system.
- 3.5 In addition the council itself is changing. We have already outsourced street cleansing and housing management which were previously undertaken in – house and will shortly be putting out to contract the ICT provision and the parking enforcement section. In addition the cabinet has taken the decision to market test the grounds maintenance service. The recycling and waste service is already the subject of an external contract. A consequence of these developments is that the policies and operations of major services will be subject to contractual agreements. The council once it has let the contract will, subject to the terms being honored, let the contractor run the service.
- 3.5 Given this backdrop and looking at what decisions need to be taken and by whom I consider that leaving the number of members as it is is not sustainable.
- 3.6 A council of 24 - 30 could, I am sure make the decisions executive and non – executive and have a focused and powerful scrutiny function. I also think that the members could effectively represent their constituents.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 It is my recommendation that Council to request that a preparatory report, research and consultation is undertaken to look at introducing predominately single member wards and reducing the number of councillors.
- 4.2 It is also my recommendation that an informal group of councillors comprised of Councillors Alan Clifton – Holt, David Monk, Karen Belcourt, Hugh Barker, George Bunting and me, produce this report for submission to the next meeting of the council on 22 February 2012.

5. CONTACT AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact:

Councillor Robert Bliss, the Leader of the Council
Tel: 01303 853202
Email: robert.bliss@shepway.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

APPENDIX 2

COUNCIL SIZE

The following table sets out some data in respect of some councils that are known to operate smaller structures.

Council	Size	Cabinet size	Scrutiny cttee 1	Scrutiny cttee 2	DC size	Other committees	Comments
Eastbourne (East Sussex)	27	6	7	-	8	Audit (6); licensing	6 neighbourhood forums
North Lincs	46	7	7	7	10	Third scrutiny body (7)	
Broxbourne (Herts)	38	6	13	-	13	Audit (4+ independent)	Planning and regulatory deals with planning and also licensing policy
Eastleigh (Hants)	44	8	11	11	-	Admin (6); audit (5); licensing, standards	5 area committees deal with planning
Hart (Hants)	35	6	11	-	19	2 planning sub-cttees; Audit (8); licensing; standards	
Purbeck (Dorset)	24/27	6 (policy group)	11	-	11	Audit (5); licensing; standards	Due to increase from 24 to 27.
West Somerset (Somerset)	28	7	9	-	15	Audit (7); licensing	4 area panels (liaison role)
Newcastle under Lyme (Staffs)	59	6	13	6	16	Many other committees	Small cabinet but rest is not efficient, reflecting large council size.
Uttlesford (Essex)	44	6	10	-	14	Licensing and environmental health (11); performance and audit (10)	2 area forums
Eden (Cumbria)	38	6	9	-	11	Licensing (10)	Cabinet members hold many “portfolio meetings” where they take decisions usually in public
Wychavon (Worcs)	45	7	11	-	15	Licensing (11)	

SURVEY OF COUNCILLORS: FULL RESULTS

- 65.2% response equating to 30 out of 46 councillors
- 40% of the respondents were members of cabinet or chair of a committee
- 57% of respondents were also parish councillors
- 6.7% of respondents were also county councillors
- Over 67% of respondents were members of 2 committees or less

Time Spent on Council Business per week

	District Council	Parish Council
Attendance at Meetings	19% less than 1 hour 30% 1-2 hours 33% 2-4 hours 7% 5-7 hours 11% 8-15 hours	24% less than 1 hour 47% 1-2 hours 24% 2-4 hours 5% 5-7 hours
Reading or preparing for committees	19% less than 1 hour 18% 1-2 hours 44% 2-4 hours 7% 5-7 hours 12% 8-15 hours	29% less than 1 hour 38% 1-2 hours 24% 2-4 hours 9% 5-7 hours
Travel to and from council meetings	42% less than 1 hour 39% 1-2 hours 15% 2-4 hours 4% 5-7 hours	84% less than 1 hour 10% 1-2 hours 5% 2-4 hours
Formal outside functions or meetings with constituents	31% less than 1 hour 35% 1-2 hours 19% 2-4 hours 8% 5-7 hours 7% over 8 hours	42% less than 1 hour 42% 1-2 hours 11% 2-4 hours 5% over 5 hours
Training or other external meetings	64% less than 1 hour 24% 1-2 hours 8% 2-4 hours 4% 5+ hours	77% less than 1 hour 23% 1-2 hours
General engagement with constituents	11% less than 1 hour 44% 1-2 hours 26% 2-4 hours 19% over 4 hours	29% less than 1 hour 41% 1-2 hours 24% 2-4 hours 6% over 4 hours

More or less time on council business

Attending the council for meetings and committees

- 50% wanted to spend more time
- 6.7% wanted to spend less time
- 43.3% thought the time spent was about right

This is not necessarily a reflection of wanting to spend more time in committees but about spending more time on council premises for council business

Working directly with constituents

- 53.8% wanted to spend more time on this
- 11.5% wanted to spend less time on this
- 34.6% said it was about right

Working with the local community

- 56% wanted to spend more time on this
- 8% wanted to spend less time on this
- 36% said it was about right

If resources were available, the following were in their top three priorities of all respondents:

- 75% A delegated ward budget
(This was the top priority for over 39% and in the top two for 57%)
- 43% Administrative Support
- 40% Paperless Committees
- 36% Facilities to hold surgeries
- 35% Political Skills Training
- 29% Better Information on role as a councillor including more briefings
- 25% Better IT support
- 25% Media Training
- 18% Case Worker

When the results were weighted based on first, second or third preferences, they largely mirrored the overall top three priorities shown.

Favouring Multi member or Single member wards

- 60% favoured Multi member wards
- 33.3% favoured Single member wards
- 6.7% were not bothered

It was a stronger feeling amongst back bench councillors [37%] for single member wards.

APPENDIX 4

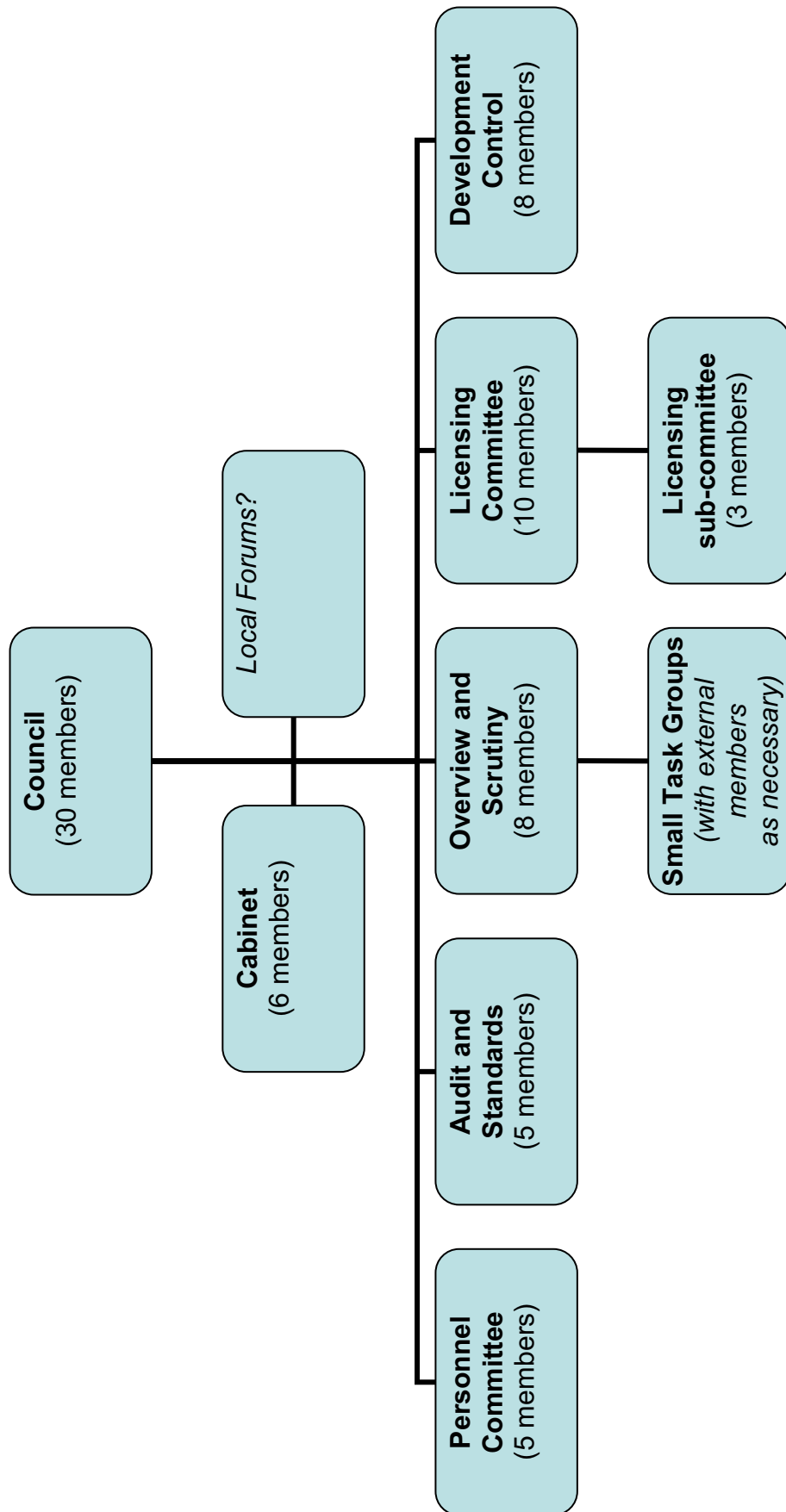


TABLE OF CURRENT WARD SIZES [based on 1 Feb figures] –**1 seat per 2,746 electorate****Area 1 – The Marsh**

Romney Marsh	1,836
Dymchurch and St Mary's Bay	5,336
New Romney Town	2,792
New Romney Coast	2,903
Lydd	4,776

Total for Area 1 (pink) 17,643 (equivalent to 6.43 [6] seats)

Area 2 – Folkestone and Sandgate

Folkestone Cheriton	5,107
Folkestone East	3,521
Folkestone Foord	4,045
Folkestone Harbour	4,202
Folkestone Harvey Central	5,033
Folkestone Harvey West	3,695
Folkestone Morehall	3,335
Folkestone Park	4,961
Folkestone Sandgate	3,474

Total for Area 1 (blue) 37,373 (equivalent to 13.61 [14] seats)

Area 3 – Hythe and north Hythe Rural

Hythe Central	4,955
Hythe East	3,474
Hythe West	3,516
Lympne and Stanford	1,578
Tolsford	1,632

Total for Area 3 (orange) 15,155 (equivalent to 5.52 [6] seats)

Area 4 – North Downs

Elham and Stelling Minnis	1,776
North Downs East	6,890
North Downs West	3,549

Total for Area 4 (green) 12,215 (equivalent to 4.45 [4] seats)

APPENDIX 8

TABLE OF CURRENT PARISH SIZES [based on 1 Feb figures] –

Area 1 – The Marsh

Brenzett	280
Brookland	365
Burmarsh	250
Newchurch	267
Dymchurch	3,110
Snargate	103
Ivychurch	214
St Mary in the Marsh	2,407
Old Romney	176
New Romney	5,695
Lydd	4,776

Total for Area 1 (pink) 17,643 (equivalent to 6.43 [6] seats)

Area 2 – Folkestone and Sandgate

Folkestone	33,899
Sandgate	3,474

Total for Area 1 (blue) 37,373 (equivalent to 13.61 [14] seats)

Area 3 – Hythe and north Hythe Rural

Newington	299
Postling	174
Stanford	306
Lympne	1,236
Lyminge (Area 3 part)	477
Saltwood	682
Hythe	11,945
Sellindge (Area 3 part)	36

Total for Area 3 (orange) 15,155 (equivalent to 5.52 [6] seats)

Area 4 – North Downs

Elmstead	246
Stelling Minnis	497
Elham	1,279
Stowting	181
Lyminge (Area 4 part)	1,760
Acrise	148
Swingfield	1,032
Monks Horton	96
Hawkinge	5,682
Paddlesworth	28
Sellindge (Area 4 part)	1,266

Total for Area 4 (green) 12,215 (equivalent to 4.45 [4] seats)

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Community Governance Review

Sevenoaks District Council's Draft Recommendations

Introduction

1. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (LGPIH) 2007 devolved the power to take decisions relating to the creation or abolition of parishes, the boundaries of parishes and the electoral arrangements of parish councils from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal councils. With effect from February 2008, district councils have had the responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews (formerly known as parish reviews) and have been able to decide whether to give effect to recommendations made in those reviews. In making that decision, councils need to take account of the views of local people.
2. Councils are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. Guidance suggests that it is good practice for a principal council to consider conducting a review every 10-15 years. In Sevenoaks, the last review was completed in 1999 and so it is timely to conduct a fresh review. There is an opportunity now, ahead of any scheduled elections, to conduct this review and have any recommendations implemented at the next full parish council elections in May 2015. At a meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee on 27th October 2011 it was recommended that a community governance review be undertaken in respect of the whole of the Sevenoaks District Council area; Council ratified the Committee's decision.

The Sevenoaks District Council Approach

3. At previous parish reviews, Sevenoaks District Council has taken the view that it is for local people or local groups to suggest changes to the existing set-up. The District Council does not initiate changes but must, ultimately, decide upon any conflicting proposals. It has always placed great store upon proposals having the backing of the local community and neighbouring parishes that may be affected. It was expected therefore that any submissions to the District Council, which had to be in writing, would state what consultations had been held with affected persons or groups and the outcome of those consultations.
4. The LGPIH requires district councils to draw up terms of reference for a community governance review. The review begins when the terms of reference are published and this was done on 30th November 2011. The terms are attached as Appendix 2 to this document.

5. The District Council must ensure that interested persons or groups have the opportunity to input to the review and the following actions were undertaken:
 - Notices displayed at the Council Offices in Sevenoaks and Swanley
 - Article on the District Council website
 - Article in In Shape (the District Council's quarterly magazine to all households)
 - Local news release
 - Letter to all parish councils within the Sevenoaks District
 - Letter to other known community groups within the Sevenoaks District
 - Letter to Sevenoaks District Councillors and to Kent County Councillors representing electoral divisions within the Sevenoaks District Council area
 - Letter to Kent County Council
 - Letter to MPs representing constituencies within the Sevenoaks District
6. The review is concluded when the District Council publishes its recommendations and this must be within 12 months of the review's commencement. The timetable is as follows:

Commencement of review	Wednesday, 30 th November 2011
Deadline for submissions	Friday, 24 th February 2012
Preparation of draft proposals followed by meeting of Electoral Arrangements Committee	By end of March 2012
Publication of the District Council's draft proposals	Mid May 2012
Consultation period concludes	End July 2012
Preparation of final proposals followed by meeting of Electoral Arrangements	Late August/early September 2012

Committee	
Full Council confirms final proposals	September 2012
The District Council publishes its recommendations	Before end November 2012
Effective date of any changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements (next full parish council elections)	Thursday, 7 th May 2015

Consideration of Submissions

7. The Electoral Arrangements Committee met on 27th March 2012 to consider the submissions received. At a previous parish review of the Sevenoaks District in the early 1980s (the first in living memory), 26 of the 29 parish councils had changes to their boundaries; at the review in the late 1990s just 13 of 29 had changes. In this latest review, submissions have been received affecting the boundaries of 13 of the 30 parish councils, mostly of a minor nature. As this is the third review in 30+ years, it is perhaps not surprising that the number of boundary issues is relatively small. However, amongst the submissions are suggestions for the creation of parishes from existing parish wards. Parish warding is the division of a parish into areas for the purpose of electing councillors and the LGPIH requires consideration as to whether:

- The number of electors in a parish makes a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient
- It is desirable that any areas of the parish should be separately represented

8. Members of the Committee were provided with the submissions in their entirety and with the guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. The Officer's report stated that there is much advice in the guidance that can be quoted in support or against a particular argument but Members would want to consider each submission on its merits in relation to the particular circumstances in the parish and not attempt to find an apparently consistent approach to all parishes.

9. Electorate figures quoted in this document are as at 1st March 2012 but these figures can change each month. Mileages quoted are as a result of site visits. Changes in parish boundaries that affect the boundaries of District Council wards and/or Kent County Council electoral divisions will be referred to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England with a recommendation that the appropriate changes be made to those boundaries at the next relevant full elections (2015 in the case of District Council elections, 2017 for Kent County Council elections).

10. At the committee meeting of 27th March 2012, the Chairman stressed that, at this stage of the review, the committee were making draft recommendations only and that they were to be subject to a 12 week consultation period.

The Draft Recommendations (alphabetic order of parish)

11. Ash-cum-Ridley (Map 1 of Appendix 1)

The Parish Council has proposed the inclusion of the Milestone School and New Ash Green Sports Centre within its Parish so as to bring the Parish office itself, situated on the site, into the Parish. Hartley Parish Council supports the proposal. The District Council recommends that the Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council proposal be adopted. The recommendation will affect the boundary between the District wards of Ash & New Ash Green and Hartley & Hodsoll Street (though no electors are affected).

12. Brasted

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. However, a change to the Brasted Parish boundary is recommended under Westerham Parish (paragraph 39 below).

13. Chevening

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

14. Chiddingstone

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

15. Cowden

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

16. Crockenhill

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

17. Dunton Green

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

18. Edenbridge

The Town Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

19. Eynsford (Map 2)

The Parish Council has proposed the transfer of the Austin Lodge Golf Course from Shoreham Parish as access is via Eynsford only. Shoreham Parish Council agrees that the Golf Club House should transfer to Eynsford in order to aid consultation on any planning matters, but would like to retain as much of the golf course as is currently in Shoreham Parish and was supported in this view by the Shoreham Society. It would appear more sensible for the whole of the golf course and associated buildings to be in one parish and, as access is from Eynsford Parish only, the District Council recommends that the Eynsford Parish Council proposal be adopted. The recommendation will affect the boundary between the District wards of Eynsford and Otford & Shoreham (though no electors are affected).

20. Farningham

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

21. Fawkham

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

22. Halstead

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

23. Hartley

23.1 The Parish Council had no proposals to make. However, see Ash-cum-Ridley (paragraph 11).

23.2 Three Hartley residents have advocated the division of the parish into wards. The thrust of the submissions was that serving parish councillors live, in the main, across the middle of the Parish and therefore do not represent the Parish as a whole. Having smaller areas (wards) for councillors to represent would encourage democratic participation, would enable parish councillors to better serve electors and would enable electors to more easily identify their local councillors. The conduct of elections for the whole Parish was also highlighted as a difficulty, in particular the size of the ballot paper and the cost of by-elections for the whole parish.

23.3 Hartley Parish Council maintained, in its response, that the Parish is one whole community. It opposes the warding proposals believing that electors are best served by councillors representing the whole of the parish; it makes all areas inclusive and avoids conflict between ward interests. The Parish Council believes that the length of ballot paper at elections is testament to the interest shown in local affairs and does not pose a problem for electors.

23.4 The District Council is not convinced that warding would necessarily, of itself, bring a better spread of representation and, in the face of opposition from the Parish Council, recommends that no change be made to the electoral arrangements of Hartley Parish.

24. Hextable (Map 3)

The Parish Council has proposed the transfer of the 14 properties in Lower Road, Hextable currently situated in Swanley Parish. Swanley Town Council has submitted the same proposal. Both are of the view that it is sensible for all the properties in Lower Road to be in Hextable Parish and avoid issues, for example, regarding the completion of road works. The District Council recommends that the proposals of Hextable Parish Council and Swanley Town Council be adopted. The recommendation will affect the boundary between the District wards of Hextable and Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village and the County electoral divisions of Swanley and Darent Valley; 4 electors will transfer.

25. Hever

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

26. Horton Kirby & South Darent

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

27. Kemsing

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

28. Knockholt

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

29. Leigh (Map 4)

29.1 Submissions have been made by the residents of North Lodge, Redleaf and Woodside Kennels, both of Penshurst Road, Penshurst, for their properties to transfer into Penshurst Parish. They feel they have a greater affinity with Penshurst rather than Leigh. Penshurst Parish Council agreed to the proposal on the grounds of the geography (the properties are closer to the village of Penshurst than they are to the village of Leigh) and the families' involvement in Penshurst activities. Leigh Parish Council does not support the proposal believing the current boundary to be historic.

29.2 Successive reviews have changed historic boundaries in order to meet present circumstances and those reviews have also considered requests from individuals to transfer properties between parishes. The proposal appears to be made on appropriate grounds so, notwithstanding the opposition of Leigh Parish Council, the District Council recommends that the two properties North Lodge,

Redleaf and Woodside Kennels transfer from Leigh Parish to Penshurst Parish. The recommendation will affect the boundary between the District wards of Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway and Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone; 6 electors will transfer.

30. Otford (Maps 5 & 6)

30.1 The Parish Council has proposed a re-alignment of the parish boundary with Shoreham Parish in Row Dow Lane to ensure that the curtilages of 3 properties (Stursdon, Mount Farm and Mount Farm Cottage) fall within one parish rather than two. Shoreham Parish Council has submitted the same proposal which is supported by the Shoreham Society. The District Council recommends that the proposals of Otford Parish Council and Shoreham Parish Council be adopted (map 5).

30.2 Otford Parish Council has also proposed the inclusion of the whole hamlet of Twitton in Otford Parish, thereby transferring 8 properties and 12 electors from Shoreham Parish. Shoreham Parish Council has proposed that Twitton as a whole be included in Shoreham Parish, transferring 9 properties and 19 electors from Otford Parish. The Shoreham Society supports the Shoreham Parish Council proposal. Otford Parish Council contends that Twitton is nearer to Otford village (0.8 miles by road) than it is to Shoreham village (1.6 miles by road) and that placing the whole of Twitton in one parish would facilitate planning consultations. A survey of the affected residents by Otford Parish Council seems to show more support for the option of placing Twitton wholly within Otford Parish rather than in Shoreham Parish. The District Council recommends the transfer of the 8 Twitton properties currently in Shoreham Parish into Otford Parish (map 6). The recommendation will affect the boundary between the County electoral divisions of Darent Valley and Sevenoaks East; 12 electors will transfer.

31. Penshurst

31.1 The Parish Council had no proposals to make. However, a change to the Penshurst Parish boundary is recommended under Leigh Parish (paragraph 29).

31.2 A great many submissions have been made concerning the structure of Penshurst Parish prompted, it appears, by the contentious issue of affordable housing. The submissions may be categorised into three distinct proposals:

- a) create separate parishes for Fordcombe (currently a ward of Penshurst Parish) and Penshurst (currently also a ward of the Parish);
- b) retain the present wards but limit parish councillors' decision making on matters relating to the ward they represent unless the matter is material to the Parish as a whole, and an associated proposal for a system of weighted voting by parish councillors in specified circumstances; and
- c) unward the Parish.

31.3 Proposal a) does not appear to emanate from a long standing difficulty of representation caused by separate warding of the two main communities of Fordcombe and Penshurst but rather is a reaction to the affordable housing issue. Opposition to the proposal has equal weight and there is no evidence of any desire for a separate Fordcombe parish from Fordcombe residents. The District Council is concerned that, however contentious the issue of affordable housing, the proposal seeks to break a seemingly strong relationship over a single issue.

31.4 The essence of proposal b) is that issues solely affecting either the Fordcombe or Penshurst wards of the Parish should be determined only by the parish councillors representing those wards. This proposal also emanates from the affordable housing debate but would be applied to any future issue specific to one or other village. At the request of the District Council, the Kent Association of Local Councils has advised the following:

“The Parish Councillors Guide by Paul Clayden helpfully states ‘where a parish is divided into wards, the Parish Councillors for each ward are elected in the same manner as Councillors are elected for a parish. The rules relating to the election of Councillors apply to each ward as if it were a parish. The parish councillors for all the wards will form only one parish council, and there will still be a parish meeting for the whole parish for the purpose other than the election of councillors.’

It follows that even in warded areas they are therefore elected to the body corporate: i.e. the Council as a whole. It is also a sensible observation that the members are bound in as individuals but as part of the body corporate by the Code of Conduct and this is also designed to ensure that there are no obvious conflicts of interest because of the issue of warding. In short: they are elected to the Council to serve the entire electorate. Members may well have greater connect (particularly in areas with more distinct or larger electorates); but this is also balanced out in the Code of Conduct. They are ultimately Councillors and not just ward members.”

The District Council does not, therefore, support proposal b).

31.5 In the difficult circumstances pertaining, proposal c) to unward the Parish has merit. There are instances of parishes in the Sevenoaks District that favour non-warding almost regardless of the size of the parish so as to avoid the sort of conflict confronting Penshurst Parish.

31.6 The District Council recommends that Penshurst Parish be unwarded and seeks views from all interested persons on a change of name from Penshurst Parish to Penshurst and Fordcombe Parish.

32. Riverhead

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

33. Seal

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

34. Sevenoaks

34.1 The Town Council proposed, in effect, a grouping of parishes so that certain amenities already provided by Sevenoaks Town Council to neighbouring parishes could be extended. The proposal included in the grouping the following parishes: Chevening, Dunton Green, part of Otford (south of the M26), Riverhead, Seal, Sevenoaks Weald and Sundridge with Ide Hill. (Whilst mention was made of Brasted, Kemsing and Shoreham Parishes in the submission, they did not appear to be part of the proposal.)

34.2 Representations have been received from the parishes of Chevening, Dunton Green (twice, views endorsed by the two local District Councillors), Edenbridge, Kemsing, Otford, Riverhead, Seal (twice), Sevenoaks Weald and Sundridge with Ide Hill and all are opposed for a variety of reasons. Opposition for similar and additional reasons was also received from some residents: one from Seal, four from Riverhead and one from Otford. The Town Council proposal would clearly have a far reaching effect upon the governance of a large proportion of the Sevenoaks District and it must be expected to have fulsome support from the affected local communities and their representatives; the proposal does not have this support. The District Council recommends that the proposal of Sevenoaks Town Council is not adopted.

35. Sevenoaks Weald

The Parish Council had no proposals to make. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

36. Shoreham (Maps 7 & 8)

36.1 The Parish Council submitted a number of proposals whilst a number have been submitted by other Parishes and Residents Associations affecting Shoreham Parish. Proposals put forward by Eynsford and Otford Parish Councils have been considered in paragraphs 19, 30.1 and 30.2.

36.2 Shoreham Parish Council, supported by the Shoreham Society, proposed a change to the parish boundary in the vicinity of Well Hill with Crockenhill Parish who, whilst not averse to the change in principle, did request a more detailed consideration of the issue which has not been taken up. In view of the lack of any formal discussion between the two Parish Councils, the District Council recommends that this proposal is not progressed until further discussions between Shoreham Parish Council and Crockenhill Parish Council take place.

36.3 Shoreham Parish Council, again supported by the Shoreham Society, further proposed that the properties in East Hill Road (a cul-de-sac), currently situated in West Kingsdown Parish (160 properties and 272 electors), be transferred into Shoreham Parish to join the properties already situated in Shoreham (map 7). Shoreham Parish Council believes that better local services

can be provided to all residents if the road is wholly situated in one parish. West Kingsdown Parish Council has proposed the reverse of the Shoreham Parish Council proposal, suggesting the transfer of the East Hill Road properties currently in Shoreham Parish (23 properties and 48 electors) into West Kingsdown Parish (map 8). Whilst no reason is given by West Kingsdown Parish Council for the proposal, they do not consider the Shoreham Parish Council proposal to be a practical option as residents are nearer to the village of West Kingsdown than they are to the village of Shoreham (though measuring by the most direct road route from East Hill Road's junction with Bower Lane and Goodbury Road, it is 3.3 miles to Shoreham High Street and 3.6 miles to the shops in Hever Road, West Kingsdown). The majority of East Hill Road itself is situated in West Kingsdown Parish and forms the East Hill ward of West Kingsdown Parish Council. Shoreham Parish Council does not say whether the same area or the whole of East Hill Road would form a separate ward of the Shoreham Parish so there is the prospect of those residents who currently have separate representation on the Parish Council ceasing to have this status. East Hill is isolated geographically, a similar position held by its neighbour Knatts Valley (also a ward of West Kingsdown Parish), so is a considerable distance from the centre of any village. At the previous review of parish boundaries in the late 1990s, West Kingsdown Parish Council submitted a similar proposal and, on that occasion, the District Council were of the opinion that the properties at the southern end of East Hill Road (in Shoreham Parish) did not form part of the same community as the northern end of the road (in West Kingsdown Parish) and therefore proposed no change to the parish boundary. The District Council again recommends that the boundary between the two Parishes in the vicinity of East Hill remains unchanged.

36.4 The Badgers Mount Residents Association has submitted a proposal for a separate parish of Badgers Mount (258 properties, 526 electors), supported by the Shoreham Society. There has been previous debate regarding the formation of a separate parish for Badgers Mount and the Residents Association has now formulated a specific proposal. Badgers Mount is a distinct community; its geographic position means that its residents will be unlikely to look south towards Shoreham for amenity provision. A local District councillor has expressed support for the proposal; a local resident has voiced objection. Shoreham Parish Council set up a working group to consider the subject and then debated a motion at a Parish Council meeting that the Parish should be split into three separate parishes: Badgers Mount, Shoreham and Well Hill. The motion was defeated.

36.5 At the meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee, Members understood that local residents identified with Badgers Mount as a separate community but, notwithstanding the details given in the submission of the Residents Association, Members required further clarity on the following issues:

- The degree of support amongst Badgers Mount electors
- The number of electors subscribing to the Badgers Mount Residents Association
- A financial strategy/business plan drawn up to demonstrate the viability of a new parish council
- A plan to manage legal issues, planning issues and issues arising from the Localism Act 2011

36.6 The Well Hill Residents Association has submitted a proposal for a separate parish of Well Hill (101 properties, 215 electors), supported by the Shoreham Society. This is the second time the Well Hill Residents Association has made this request and has re-submitted its 2006 document along with the report of the Shoreham Parish Council working group that was convened to discuss community governance. Well Hill is a small community some distance from the village of Shoreham or any other village in the Sevenoaks District. Its residents look more towards the north and communities in London than to the south and Shoreham. The submission by the Shoreham Society gives a similar picture. Three submissions were received from Well Hill residents raising conflicting points in support and against a separate Well Hill parish.

36.7 In 2006 the Electoral Arrangements Committee invited the Well Hill Residents Association to address some concerns of Members around the degree of support amongst local residents and the financial viability of a Well Hill parish. The new submission still relies on the 2006 document and doesn't appear to have addressed the issues raised by the District Council in 2006. As already noted, Shoreham Parish Council debated the motion that the Parish should be split into three separate parishes and that motion was defeated. The District Council therefore asks the same questions of the Well Hill Residents Association bulleted in paragraph 36.5.

36.8 The submission from the Shoreham Society proposed the creation of a new parish of Shoreham (516 properties, 887 electors) without the Badgers Mount and Well Hill wards. The Society contends that the three communities of Shoreham, Badgers Mount and Well Hill have a clear sense of their own independent identities and little affinity with one another. The District Council recommends that this proposal cannot be moved forward until the Badgers Mount and Well Hill issues are resolved.

36.9 Shoreham Parish Council also proposed a reduction from 6 to 5 of parish councillors elected for the Shoreham ward, so as to more fairly represent the number of electors in each of the three wards making up the Parish Council. The electorate of Shoreham ward is 887 (6 parish councillors presently, a councillor/elector ratio of 1:148), Badgers Mount ward is 526 (3 and 1:175) and Well Hill ward is 215 (1 1:215). 5 councillors for the Shoreham ward would give a ratio of 1:177 for that ward. The District Council recommends that, provided the three wards of Shoreham Parish are retained, the number of Parish Councillors representing the Shoreham ward be reduced from 6 to 5.

37. Sundridge with Ide Hill

The Parish Council has written to the District Council but has no specific proposals for changes to parish boundaries or electoral arrangements. The District Council is recommending no change to the parish boundary.

38. Swanley

Swanley Town Council submitted a proposal that has been considered under paragraph 24.

39. Westerham (Map 9)

The Parish Council has proposed the transfer of High View Cottage from Brasted Parish as access to the property is from Westerham Parish only. There is support from Brasted Parish Council and from the property's owner. The District Council recommends that the Westerham Parish Council proposal be adopted. The recommendation will affect the boundary between the District wards of Westerham & Crockham Hill and Brasted, Chevening & Sundridge; 2 electors will transfer.

40. West Kingsdown

West Kingsdown Parish Council has submitted a proposal that has been considered under paragraph 36.3.

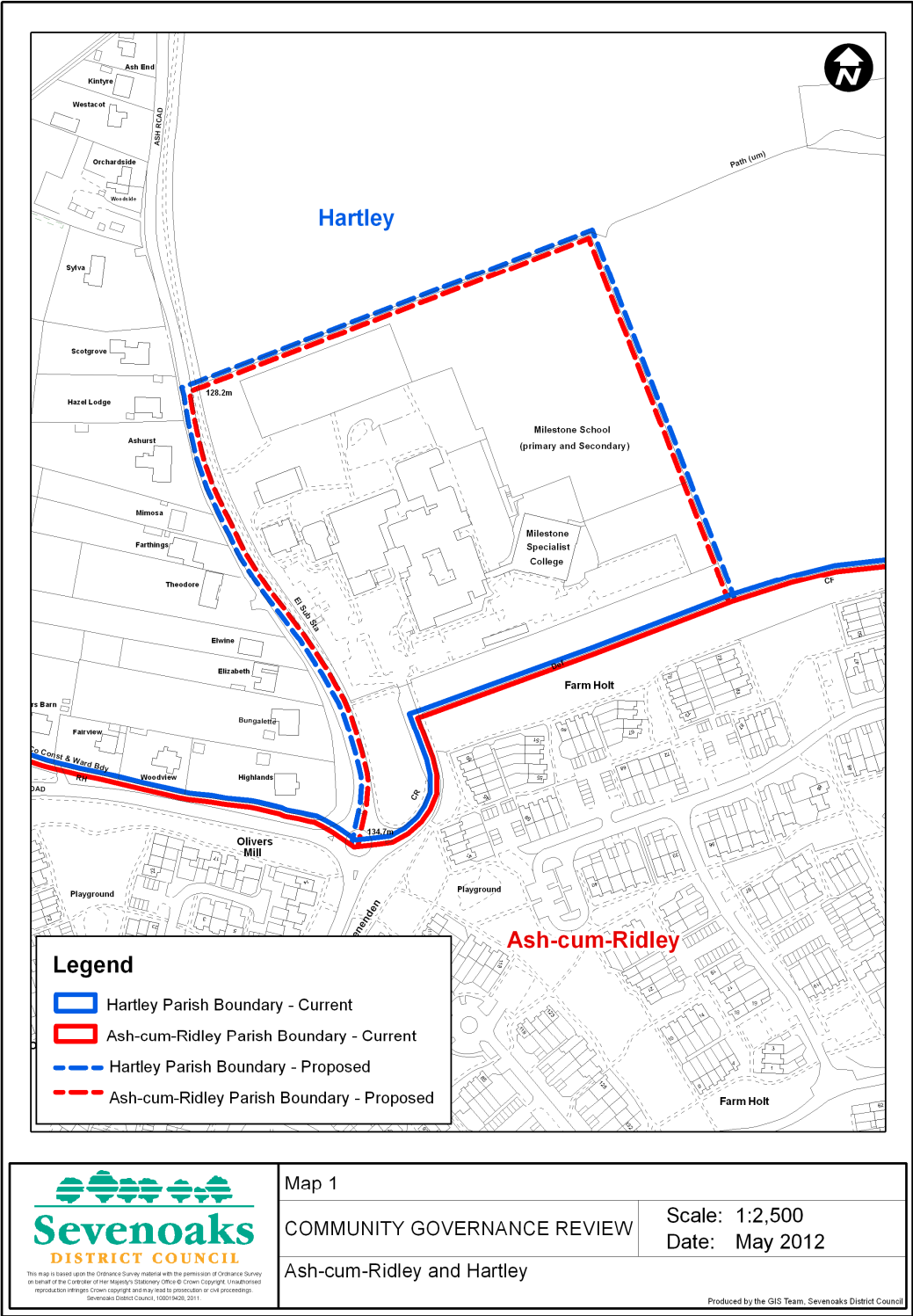
Responding to the District Council's Draft Recommendations

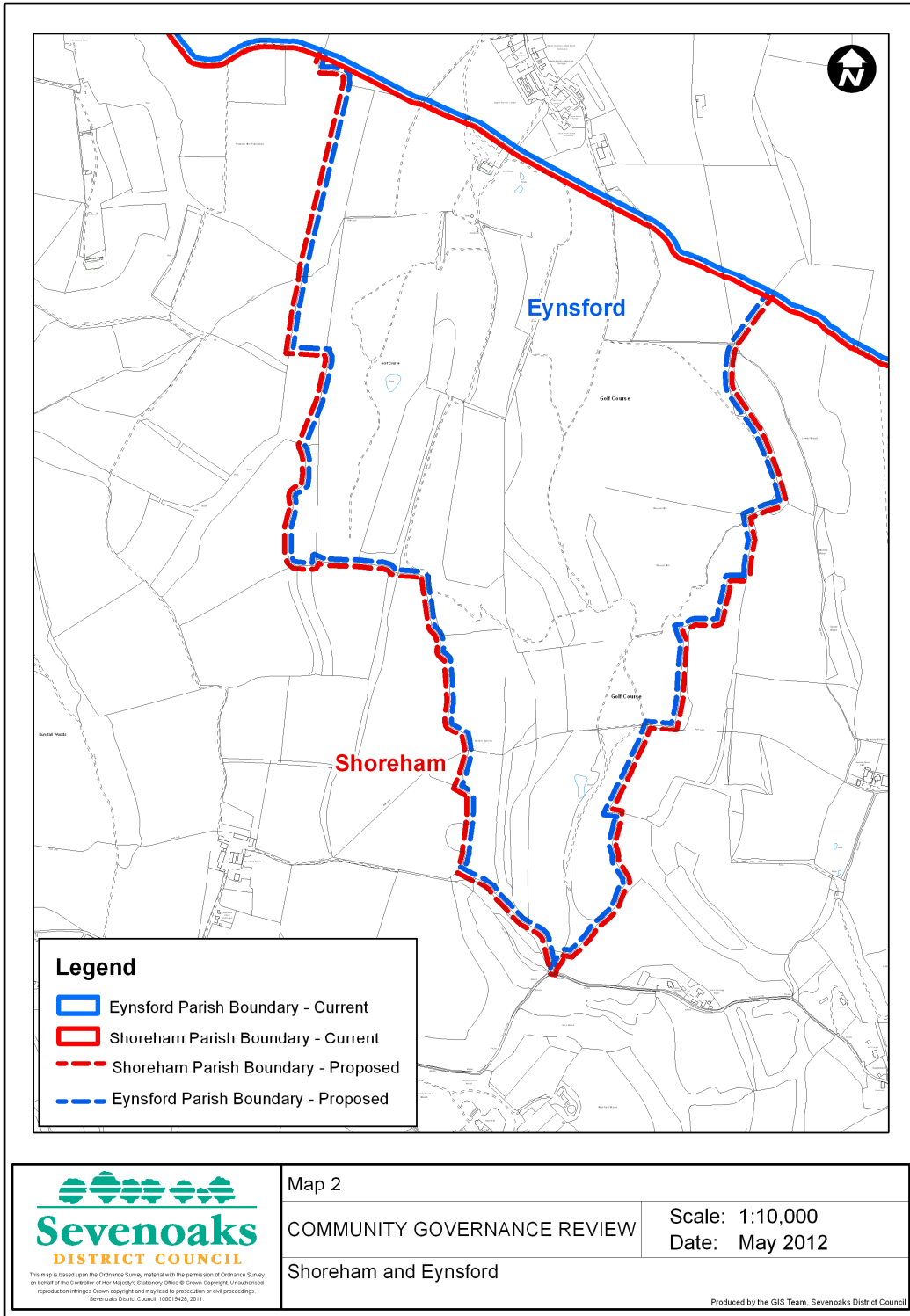
41. The District Council would welcome representations about its draft recommendations which may be made as follows:

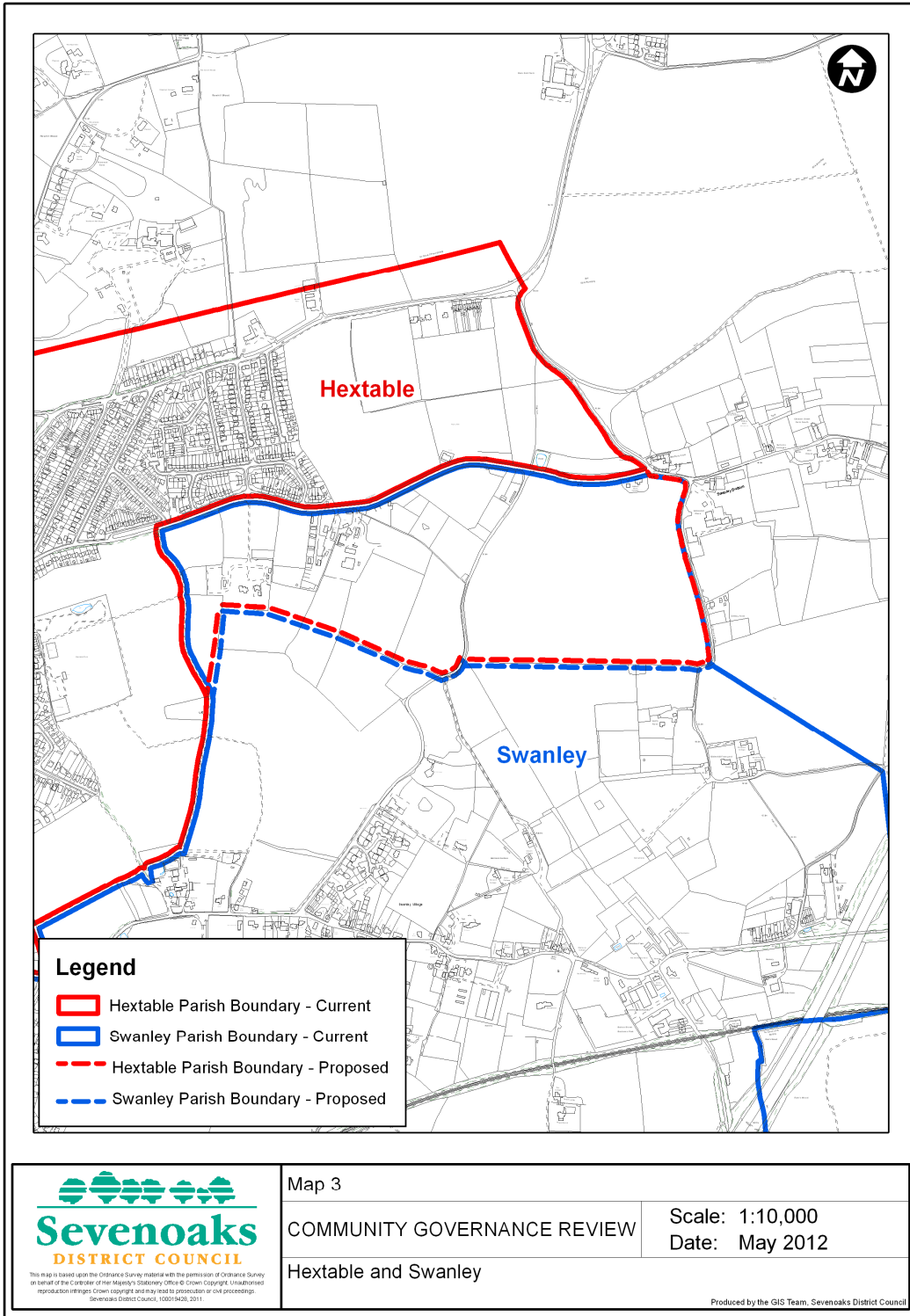
In writing to	Ian Bigwood, Electoral Services Manager, Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG
By e-mail to	elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk

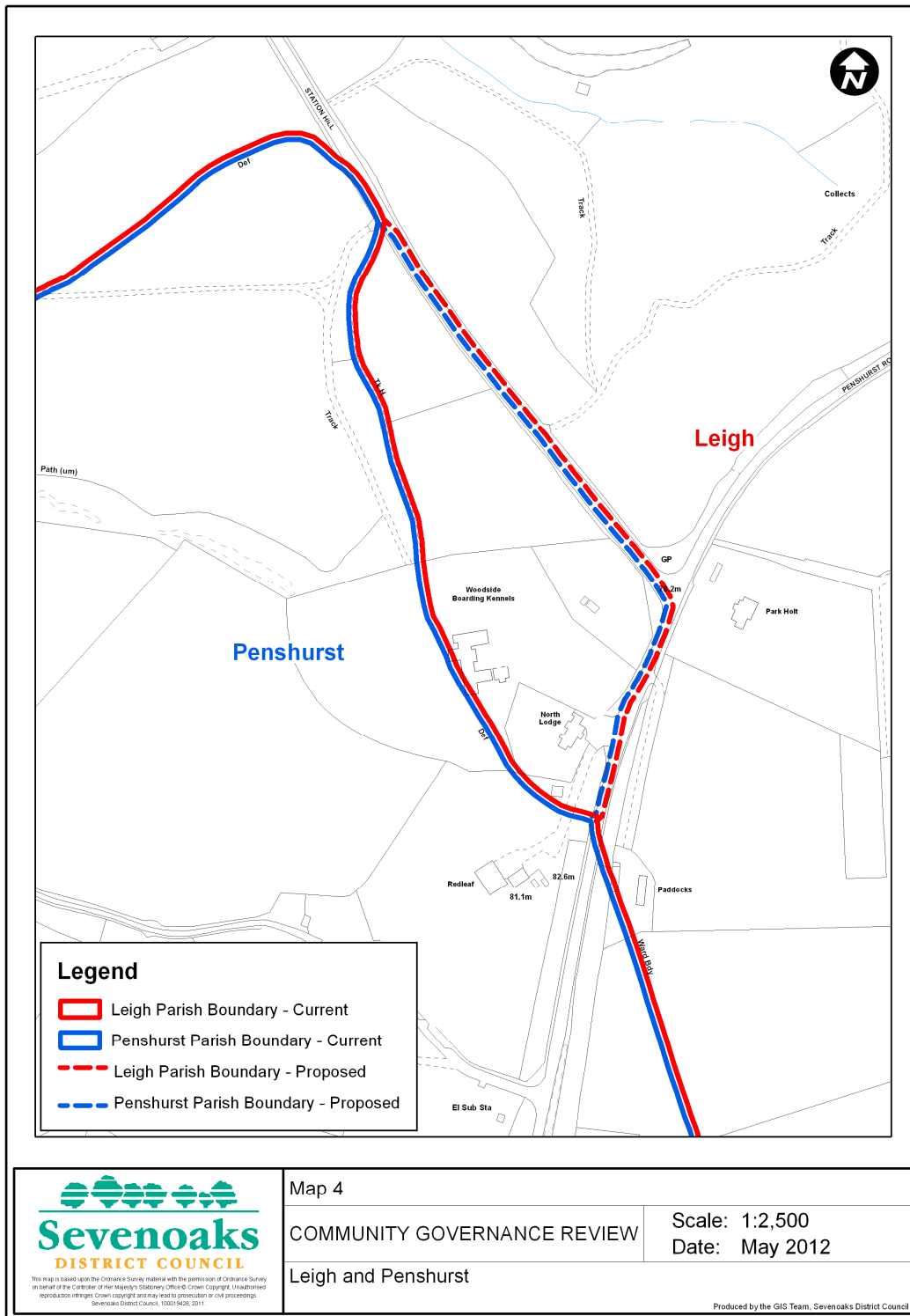
The deadline for representations to reach the District Council is 31st July 2012. After that time, the District Council will consider all submissions and publish its final recommendations before the end of November 2012. Changes to parish boundaries will take effect at the next full parish council elections on 7th May 2015.

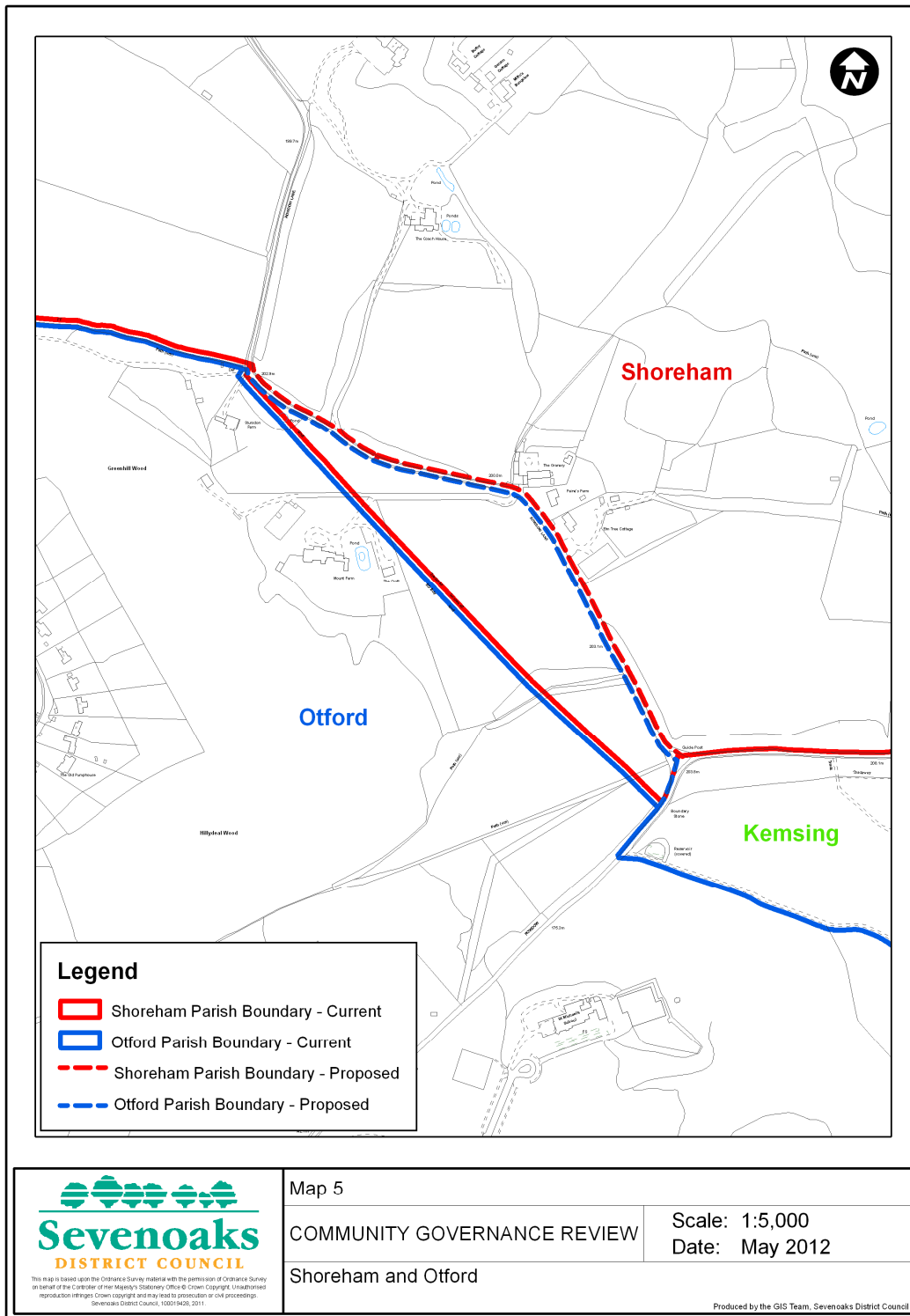
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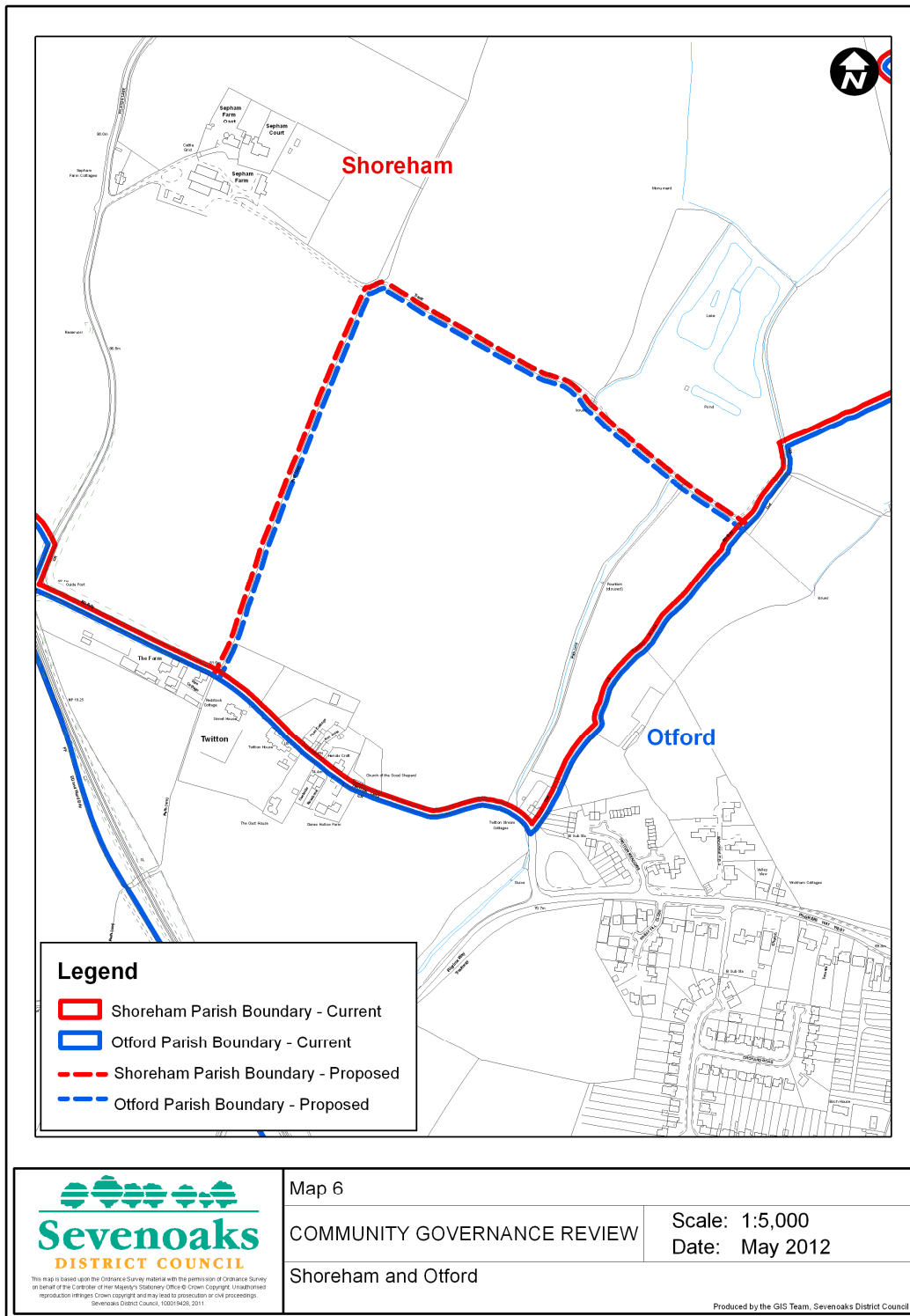


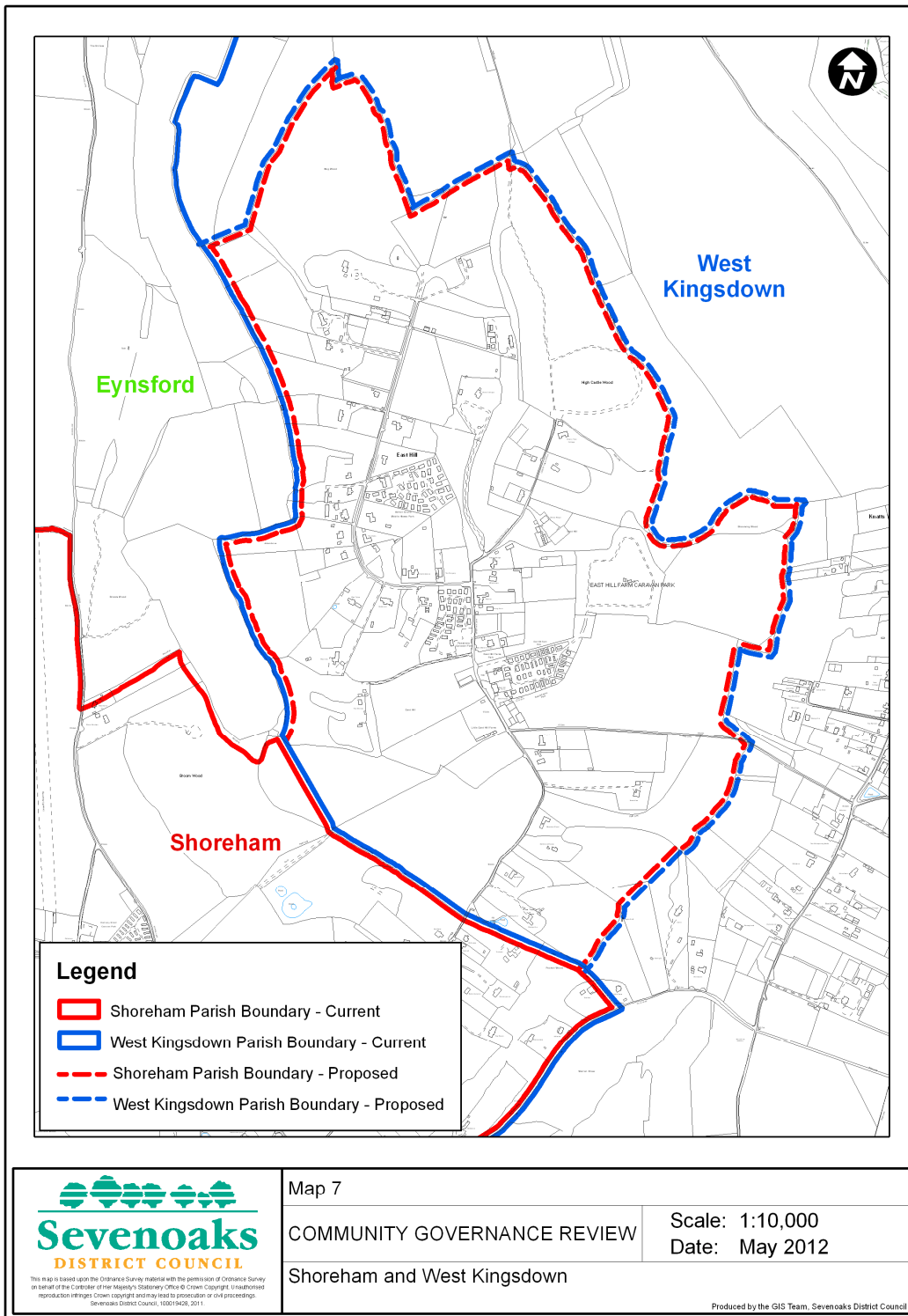


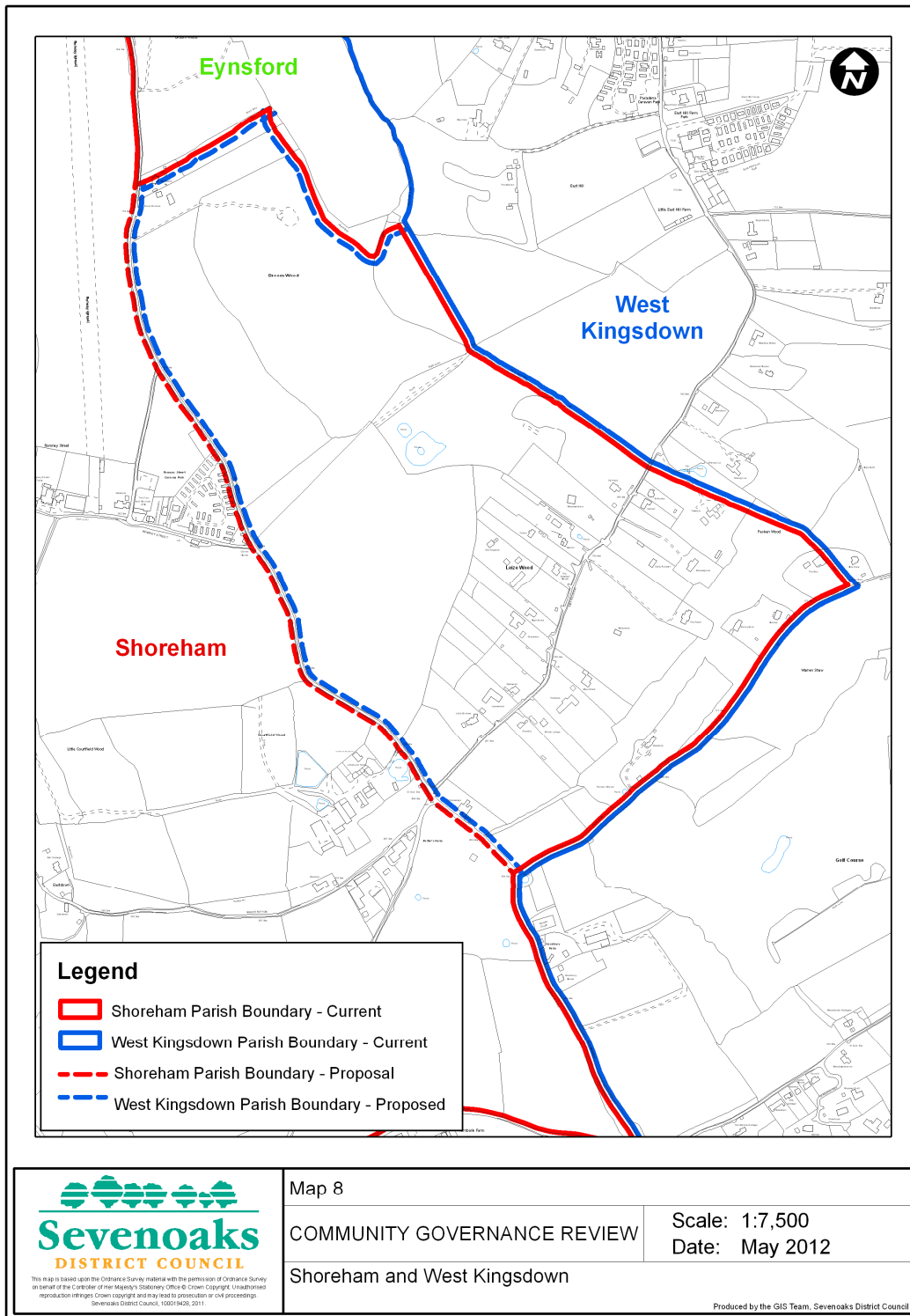












Community Governance Review

Terms of Reference

Sevenoaks District Council has resolved to undertake a community governance review of the whole of the Sevenoaks District. The District Council will be guided by the relevant legislation and guidance, in particular the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission).

Why is the District Council undertaking the review?

Government guidance recommends a review every 10-15 years. The last review was completed in 1999.

What is a community governance review?

It is an opportunity for interested persons to consider how local communities are represented by considering:

- creating, merging, grouping, altering or abolishing parishes
- the naming of parishes and the style of new parishes
- the electoral arrangements for parishes (overall number of councillors, parish warding and number of councillors for those wards)

Parish governance in the Sevenoaks District Council area

Parish councils, representing local communities, cover the whole of the Sevenoaks District Council area. The District Council believes that parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level and is keen to ensure that parish governance in the Sevenoaks District continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges ahead. Government guidance states that “Ultimately, the recommendations made in a community governance review ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.”

How will the District Council publicise the review?

The District Council will publicise the review by displaying a notice at the Council Offices in Sevenoaks and Swanley, placing articles on the District Council’s website and in the In Shape magazine and by issuing local news releases. Specifically, the District Council will write to all parish councils and to other known community groups, to District Councillors and to the relevant County Councillors and MPs and also to Kent County Council.

What does the District Council expect from interested persons?

Anyone may make representations to the District Council and those views will be put before Members of the Council at meetings of the Electoral Arrangements Committee. The Council would like to ensure that:

- electors are able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident because it considers this sense of identity and community gives strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride
- parishes reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity
- boundaries between parishes will normally reflect the “no-man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or pronounced physical barriers
- any proposals have been discussed and, preferably, agreed with affected parishes before a submission is made to the District Council

Timetable for the review (revised March 2012)

Action	Date
Commencement of review	Wednesday, 30 th November 2011
Deadline for submitting views	Friday, 24 th February 2012
Submissions considered by the District Council’s Electoral Arrangements Committee	End of March 2012
Publication of the District Council’s draft proposals	Mid May 2012
Deadline for submitting views on the District Council’s draft proposals	End July 2012
Further submissions considered by the Electoral Arrangements Committee	Late August/early September 2012
Meeting of the full Council to confirm the District Council’s final proposals	September 2012
Publication of the District Council’s recommendations	Before end November 2012
Effective date of any changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements	Thursday, 7 th May 2015 (next full parish council elections)

How to submit your views

In writing to	Ian Bigwood, Electoral Services Manager, Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG
By e-mail to	elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk

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By: Graham Gibbens, Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee

Geoff Wild, Director of Governance and Law

To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
2 August 2012

Subject: Kent County Council Election – May 2013

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary This report updates Members on work being undertaken with the District and Borough Councils in Kent to plan for the County Council elections in May 2013 and the publication of the election results on the County Council's website.

1. Election Planning

(1) The County Returning Officer (CRO) and his staff are already working closely with Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers in the 12 District Councils in relation to planning and co-ordinating the 2013 County Council Elections.

(2) Committee Members will recall that there was an internal audit review of election expenses for the 2005 and 2009 County Council elections in 2011, which resulted in a number of recommendations being made as to future arrangements for dealing with the expense claims from District and Borough Councils for undertaking work on the County Council elections. The CRO has held productive discussions with the Kent Association of Electoral Registration Officers and Staff (Kent AEROs) Group and agreement has been reached in the following areas:

- (a) Each District/Borough Council will provide the CRO with a detailed costs estimate for running the County Council elections in their area.
- (b) Advance payments will be made to District/Borough Councils at no less than 75% and no more than 90% of the estimate supplied. It is the final decision of the CRO as to the exact proportion of the advanced payment, which will be based on an assessment of the performance by the relevant District/Borough Council at the previous County Council election, including the timely submission of accurate accounts.
- (c) The CRO will provide a standard document to each District/Borough Council, which will mirror the document used by the Election Claims Unit when operating national elections (for Government departments and the Electoral Commission), to ensure

that the format for submitting expenditure returns is consistent across all District/Borough Councils;

- (d) Clear definitions of the limits and detail of allowable expenditure will be provided to all District/Borough Councils based on the Scale of Election Fees and Expenses approved on an annual basis by this Committee. Because the CRO is not VAT registered, all costs on election expenditure claims will be shown as gross amounts. KCC will then reclaim the VAT on those amounts from HMRC.
- (e) All District/Borough Councils have been advised that they must submit their completed election expense claims to KCC within 6 months of the date of the election. Failure to do so will affect their advance payment for the following election.

(3) Further liaison meetings are planned with the relevant District and Borough Council staff between now and the elections next May to ensure that the County Council's expectations with regard to the running of the elections are achieved.

(4) At its meeting on 1 March 2012, this Committee asked for a report on alternative methods of running County Council elections, including the option of KCC running its own elections. The CRO has given this matter serious consideration and is of the view that the existing arrangements with the District and Borough Councils, which have worked largely successfully for many years, should continue for the following reasons:

- (a) The District and Borough Councils are the electoral registration authorities and are also responsible for running all other elections, viz. European Parliament; Parliamentary; District, Town and Parish; Police Commissioner and all referenda. If any of those elections or by-elections take place at the same time as a County Council Election, statutory rules on the combination of polls would apply, which means that whilst there is nothing to prevent the County Council running its own election, much of the decision-making about the organisation of the poll and the counting arrangements may not be the County Council's responsibility but allocated to whoever is appointed as the Returning Officer for the primary election. Accordingly, the County Council could only investigate alternative methods of running its own elections (and have complete control over the detailed arrangements) where there is not a combined poll, which is very infrequent;
- (b) Because of the role undertaken by the District/Borough Councils in running all types of elections, and because it is highly unusual for a 12 month period to go by without any elections taking place, the District and Borough Councils have built up considerable expertise in running elections, including significant investment in IT and other systems, which would take the County Council years (and considerable expense) to replicate;
- (c) All District/Borough Councils have supply contracts in place with the owners/occupiers of properties in which polling stations are located; printers, logistics companies; trained casual staff; etc, all of

which can be deployed at short notice in the run-up to an election. It would require considerable investment in time and resources for the County Council to seek to replicate these arrangements for their own elections;

- (d) There are three different electoral registration and election IT systems deployed in District and Borough Councils across Kent: Halarose; Strand; and Express. The IT systems are utilised for a number of essential election tasks, including the production of polling cards; matching postal vote requests and signatures to entries on the electoral register; producing postal votes; and clarifying the attestation of candidates' nomination forms. It would be a difficult and potentially expensive task for the County Council to seek to co-ordinate the output from three different IT systems used in the 12 District and Borough Councils on an infrequent basis;

- (5) The good working relationship with the Kent AEROs group and the supportive approach that has been negotiated in relation to the recommendations of KCC's internal audit team has meant that the CRO is confident that the County Council elections will be run efficiently and effectively by the District and Borough Councils in Kent, who are best placed to continue to perform this role for KCC.

2. Election results

- (1) As Members will be aware, it has become custom and practice to display the County Council election results on a large screen at County Hall and on KCC's website as and when the results for the individual electoral divisions are announced. The CRO and his staff are currently undertaking work with colleagues in the Digital Services Team and the ICT service to ensure that this is achieved in the most effective and cost-efficient way for the elections in May 2013. It is intended the Committee Management System, "modern.gov", which is used to publish committee agendas, minutes and the Member pages on KCC's website, will be used to store the election results and feed the live results web page. This is a no-cost option as the software is already able to sort and publish this data. The modern.gov system has been tested by inputting the data from the recent Tunbridge Wells East by-election. The systems capabilities will be demonstrated at the meeting.

- (2) Work is underway to develop this in order to display the results in more detail on the day that the results are announced. The requirements for ICT to carry out the supporting work are currently being drafted.

- (3) Work has also been carried out by the Digital Services Team to produce some visual examples of how the website could display the results as they are announced in a usable and accessible way. The Digital Services Manager will be attending the Committee meeting to demonstrate these examples to Members and to get their feedback to inform the display of the election results.

3. Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to agree the following:

- (a) The Committee notes the progress made with regard to planning for the 2013 County Council elections and confirms that the running of County Council elections remains with the District and Borough Councils; and
- (b) that the progress made to date on the display of election results for the County Council elections in May 2013 be noted and that Members be invited to give feedback on the way that these should be visually displayed on the website.

Background papers:

Kent Audit Review of County Council Election Expenses for 2005 and 2009

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