

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

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Licence Number: GD 100049926 2012

Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	3
2 Analysis and draft recommendations	5
Submissions received	6
Electorate figures	6
Council size	6
Electoral fairness	6
General analysis	7
Electoral arrangements	8
Sittingbourne area	8
Isle of Sheppey	11
Faversham area	13
Conclusions	15
Parish electoral arrangements	15
3 What happens next?	17
4 Mapping	19
Appendices	
A Glossary and abbreviations	21
B Table B1: Draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council	24

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.