

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

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To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee – 1 April 2014

Subject: Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report updates Cabinet Members on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Electoral Review of Kent County Council's area.

1. Introduction

(1) Since the last update to the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee, in September 2013, a meeting has been held with Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) at which they outlined the following principles as the basis of their review:

- (a) The review is designed to deliver broadly the same number of electors for each division.
- (b) Ideally, there should be cross-party agreement on the 'right' council size for the future (preferably backed up by a Council resolution).
- (c) It is up to the Council, through its political groups (collectively or individually) to work with the LGBCE to design the new arrangements; the level of input is entirely optional - it can be as minimal or as detailed as the Council wishes.
- (d) Decisions will be based on (a) electoral equality, (b) community identity and (c) effective/convenient local government.
- (e) 8 other counties are currently undergoing a similar review: Warks, Devon, Herts, Lincs, Cambs, Dorset and Notts.
- (f) The most immediate requirement is to ascertain electorate forecasts across the county up to 2020.
- (g) 'Community identity' is less important at county level than it is at district level - there needs to be overwhelming evidence of community disruption to prevent, for example, a county division from straddling or splitting parishes.
- (h) Officer briefing workshops will be arranged.
- (i) County divisions must be co-terminous with district/borough boundaries; they cannot follow CCG boundaries, for example, if that would result in them straddling two or more districts.
- (j) There will effectively be 12 separate reviews, covering each district area.
- (k) The LGBCE has no preconceived or fixed agenda aimed at either increasing or reducing county member numbers, although historically and statistically the majority of reviews have resulted in 10% fewer divisions.

- (l) If desired, the Council (by way of resolution) can formally request that the LGBCE conduct a Single Member Division Review under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. KCC currently has 72 divisions and 84 Members.
- (m) The Lead Commissioner for the KCC review will be Sir Tony Redmond (former Local Government Ombudsman)

(2) The LGBCE ran a workshop at KCC on 28 January at which they briefed key officers on the review process and shared information.

2. Timetable

(1) The timetable for the review is as follows:

	Date/timescale
Produce revised District-level forecasts. <i>(This will incorporate the latest data from the 2011 Census and the latest housing numbers from the District Councils).</i>	End of March 2014
Officers will supply and agree forecast electorate figures; revise the table showing potential populations for each electoral division, for each overall Council size option, based on the new District forecasts.	End of February 2014
The Lead Commissioner will brief Group Leaders ahead of full Council (where a briefing to all Members will be given).	30 April 2014
Produce Ward-level forecasts, consistent with the District forecasts.	End of April 2014
From the range of options being looked at, boil down to three size bands for each District (except Maidstone which potentially has 4), used in different combinations to achieve a target county figure. These proposed boundaries will need to be defined, and Business Intelligence have produced a spreadsheet to enable this to be done efficiently. Once the Electoral Division options are defined, the spreadsheets will be mapped.	May 2014
Consult with Members.	June 2014
KCC may submit its formal proposition on Council size by July 2014. This can be either by formal Council resolution or informally by each political group.	July 2014
LGBCE will submit its initial proposal on divisional patterns for each of the 12 districts in September 2014 for 3 months' consultation until December 2014.	September 2014

Following analysis of the evidence and consultation responses, the LGBCE will publish its draft recommendation.	February 2015
Consultation on the draft will take place (subject to any elections).	March-May 2015
LGBCE will issue its final draft recommendations to KCC.	July 2015
LGBCE will publish its final draft recommendations.	August 2015
The draft recommendations will be laid before Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject the recommendations (nothing more). Parliament has never (so far) rejected LGBCE recommendations.	October 2015
If accepted by Parliament, the recommendations will be signed off by LGBCE and come into force.	January 2016

3. Modelling Council Size

(1) The figures used to model Council Size will be based on the electorate population estimates for 2020 using “Interactive Population Toolkit”¹. These should be used as a rough guide at this stage as the figures are in the process of being updated by the Business Intelligence Team. It is hoped that updated figures will be available at the meeting on 1 April 2014.

(2) 84, 78, 72, 66 and 63 Members have been used to model council size to ensure that (as far as possible) no District average is +/-10% from the county-wide average for the number of electors per councillor. The exception to this is the 63 Member Council option. This would result in Thanet and Tunbridge Wells being 12% and 13% under the county average. Different Council size models can be produced for consideration if required.

(3) Kent County Council could remain at 84 Members and still comply with the Commission’s requirements. In this instance, compared with 2013, Ashford and Gravesham would increase by one Member each and Sevenoaks and Thanet would decrease by one Member each to ensure no District average was +/-10% from the county-wide average. The Committee is advised that KCC already has one of the highest ratios of registered electors to each elected Member, as the table at **Appendix 1** shows.

4. Next Steps

(1) The Commission is due to brief all Members of the Council on 30 April 2014; this will be preceded by LGBCE briefings for each of the Group Leaders.

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http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/kent_facts_and_figures/population_and_census/population_forecasts.aspx

The Member briefing will be an opportunity for the LGBCE to convey the key messages about the review and to take any questions.

Recommendation(s): Members are invited to note the report and comment on the next steps in relation to the review.

Background Documents:

None

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Appendix 1

Neighbour Authorities (County Councils)	Number of Wards/ Divisions	Council Size	Total Electorate at 16/10/2012	Electors per Councillor	Area (Hectares)	Density (Electors per Hectare)
Kent	72	84	1099140	13085	354348	3.10
Essex	70	75	1082688	14436	346434	3.13
Hampshire	75	78	1032175	13233	367896	2.81
Lancashire	84	84	906393	10790	290297	3.12
Hertfordshire	77	77	852476	11071	164308	5.19
West Sussex	71	71	626434	8823	199086	3.15
Staffordshire	60	62	665529	10734	262029	2.54
Devon	62	62	599847	9675	254668	2.36
Lincolnshire	77	77	551083	7157	592058	0.93
Nottinghamshire	54	67	609330	9094	208478	2.92
Derbyshire	61	64	609661	9526	254668	2.39
Northamptonshire	57	57	533308	9356	236397	2.26
Norfolk	84	84	674761	8033	537078	1.26
Gloucestershire	53	53	477203	9004	265317	1.80
Worcestershire	52	57	447246	7846	174052	2.57
Leicestershire	52	55	521011	9473	208289	2.50