



Taking part in the

Electoral review of Kent County Council

A guide for councillors



A message from Max Caller CBE: Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

This briefing tells you all you need to know about the electoral review of your council. It tells you what an electoral review is, why we are conducting it and how you can influence the outcome.

The electoral review is an opportunity for you to shape your council for the future. On council size, the review will help you decide how you will represent communities in the future and ensure that your governance arrangements reflect your long term ambitions. When we come to consider boundaries, we will aim to build electoral divisions that reflect communities and lock in electoral fairness for future elections.

The outcome of the review is not pre-determined. The Commission will only take decisions after giving careful consideration to the evidence provided by you, your council and local communities throughout the process.

Your local knowledge will be valuable in helping us come to our conclusions. The best electoral reviews are those where councillors engage with the process. The Commission will take decisions on the strength of evidence provided during the review after we have assessed all submissions against our statutory criteria. It doesn't matter whether evidence comes from the council, council groups or individual councillors, we have an open mind about which proposals we will put forward as formal recommendations.

The electoral arrangements of your council will change. Our experience of electoral reviews clearly shows that changing boundaries in one part of your area will inevitably have an impact on other areas. Most divisions are likely to experience a change to one or more of their boundaries, name or number of councillors representing them. We will look to you to influence the nature of those changes.

We will make it as easy as possible for you to influence the process. In addition to our preliminary dealings with the council, we will hold at least two phases of public consultation before we finalise the recommendations of the review. We encourage you to engage with your communities about the review so we can get the broadest possible spread of evidence.

I hope you find this briefing helpful.

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Max Caller CBE

Electoral review timetable

The timetable for your electoral review is set out below. Timescales occasionally change during the review but you can keep up to date with developments by looking at the dedicated page for your review on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Stage of review	Date/duration	Description	Note	Outputs
Preliminary stage	February 2014 – September 2014	Commission gathers information about the council e.g. electorate forecasts and briefs group leaders, the full council and parishes/community groups on the process.	<p>This is the council's opportunity to put forward its view on future council size: the total number of councillors to be elected to the council.</p> <p>We will also work with council staff to build electorate forecasts for the next 5/6 years as required by law.</p> <p>As county divisions cannot cross external district boundaries, you will need to work out an allocation of a whole number of county councillors for each district which could influence your view on council size.</p>	<p>The Commission expects to receive submissions from the council and/or council groups at the end of this phase which provides a rationale, backed up with evidence, for a proposed council size.</p> <p>The Commission will consider the council's submission(s) from the preliminary phase before deciding on a number which will form the basis of its work to draw up new division boundaries.</p> <p>In some circumstances, for example where a major change in council size is proposed, the Commission will consider holding a public consultation on the proposal.</p>
Stage One	23 September 2014 – 1 December 2014	Public consultation on new electoral division boundaries.	<p>The Commission will publish a council size which it is 'minded to' recommend and invite electoral division proposals based on that council size and the allocation of county councillors between districts.</p> <p>The council size will provide us with an optimum councillor: elector ratio to build divisions which deliver electoral fairness.</p>	The Commission usually receives a council scheme for proposed new divisions across the local authority. We will also consider localised evidence from organisations and members of the public on the most appropriate division pattern for your area to help us draw up draft recommendations.

Stage of review	Date/duration	Description	Note	Outputs
Draft recommendations consultation	12 May 2015 – 6 July 2015	Publication of draft recommendations on new divisions for the local authority and a public consultation on them.	The Commission will publish full draft proposals for new electoral arrangements: new divisions, division boundaries and division names for public comment.	<p>We will gather views on our draft proposals where they support the recommendations or whether they propose alternative electoral division patterns.</p> <p>The Commission will then finalise its recommendations after considering all the evidence received at each stage of the review.</p>
Publication of final recommendations	29 September 2015	Once the consultation on draft recommendations has concluded, the Commission will consider all the evidence before drawing up its final recommendations for new electoral arrangements.	This stage marks the end of the Commission's direct involvement with your authority on the review. Once we have published final recommendations, we are unable to amend them.	We will produce a draft order – the legal document which will bring into force the final recommendations – in preparation for laying in Parliament.
Parliamentary scrutiny	November 2015	A draft order seeking the implementation of the final recommendation will be laid in both Houses of Parliament under the negative resolution procedure	<p>The draft order will be placed in both Houses of Parliament for 40 days (with possible gaps depending on recesses) for the consideration of members.</p> <p>Parliament can accept or reject the recommendations. It cannot modify them.</p>	Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the Commission will 'make' the order at the end of the 40 days and inform the council that order is now complete so that you can prepare for elections on the new arrangements.
Implementation	Local elections 2017	New electoral arrangements: council size, division boundaries and division names comes into effect at the elections.	District councils will have prepared electoral registers and other arrangements on the basis of the order e.g. polling districts and polling stations.	New electoral arrangements for your area come into effect.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body established by Parliament in April 2010. We are not part of government and are accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee.

Our organisation consists of the Chair of the Commission and five Commissioners who are supported by approximately 25 members of staff.

What is an electoral review?

An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. These are:

- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size.
- The names, number and boundaries of wards or electoral divisions.
- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward or division.

The review is likely to have implications for the whole local authority not just areas with high levels of electoral inequality.

Why Kent County Council?

The Commission is conducting the review to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

Every year, the Commission assesses electorate data for each local authority in England and we will intervene where 'significant' electoral inequality exists.

Significant electoral inequality, sufficient to trigger a review, is where:

- 30% (or more) wards or divisions have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average for the authority and/or:
- One (or more) ward or division has an electoral variance of more than 30% from the average.

The Commission's criteria for intervention are well established and were the subject of a consultation in November 2010.

Kent triggers the review criteria as 31% of divisions have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average with little prospect of the variances correcting themselves through development or population movements. A full table of current divisions and their variances is appended to this briefing.

Electoral review process

The electoral review will have two distinct parts:

- **Council size** – before we re-draw division boundaries, the Commission will come to a view on the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in future. We will come to a conclusion on council size after hearing the council's (and/or councillors') views during the preliminary phase.
- **Electoral division boundaries** – we will re-draw division boundaries so that they meet our statutory criteria (see page 9). You will have an opportunity to put forward your ideas in two phases of public consultation.

You, and the communities you represent, can influence the review. Please refer to the timetable on pages 3-4 to find out when you can have your say.

Part one: council size

Key date:

Deadline for council and/or council groups' submission on council size:

8 August 2014

The first part of the review will determine the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in the future. We call this 'council size'. We will not consider electoral division boundaries until we have completed this phase.

By the end of the preliminary stage of the review, we expect the council and/or its political groups, to present the Commission with a case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.

The Commission will make its judgment on council size by considering three broad areas:

- We will look at the **governance arrangements** of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
- The Commission will look at the council's **scrutiny functions** relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
- We will also consider the **representational role of councillors in the local community** and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

If you plan to make a submission to us on council size (whether it's for an increase, reduction or maintaining current arrangements), you should make sure you address these areas and that your view is backed up by evidence.

Below, we explain more about the three areas:

Governance arrangements

The Commission aims to ensure that councils have the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the council in an effective way now and in the future.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about cabinet and/or committee responsibilities, number of committees and their workload, delegation to officials, other bodies and plans for the future.

Scrutiny functions

Every local authority has mechanisms to scrutinise the executive functions of the council and other local bodies. They also have significant discretion over

the kind (and extent) of activities involved in that process. In considering council size, the Commission will want to satisfy itself that these responsibilities can be administered in a convenient and effective way.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about the number of councillors your authority needs to hold the decision makers to account and ensure that the council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations (e.g. other public sector bodies, partnerships, trusts and).

Representational role of councillors

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to representation and members will represent and provide leadership to their communities in different ways. However, we are interested in hearing about the extent to which members routinely engage with communities and how this affects workload and responsibilities.

To support your view, the Commission is looking for evidence about how councillors interact with their communities, their caseloads and the kind of support they need effectively to represent local people and groups.

County councillor allocation across districts

By law, electoral divisions cannot cross the external boundaries of any district. Therefore, we will need to allocate a specific number of county councillors to each district before we start to draw up a pattern of divisions. We will base the allocation on the current and forecast electorates for each district. You are strongly advised to consider how county councillors will be allocated between districts as you draw up your proposal for an overall council size.

Making an effective representation

When you put forward a council size, we will assess your number (or range of numbers) against your 15 'nearest neighbour' authorities as set out by CIPFA:
www.cipfastats.net/resources/nearestneighbours/profile.asp?view=select&dataset=england.

If your proposal means that your council size would be well above or below the average of your statistical neighbours, you need to ensure your case for that council size is particularly strong. In some cases, your current council size could put you outside the range of your neighbours so we would need a strong case to retain the *status quo*.

If you want to make sure your case on council size is as strong as possible, you should:

- Make sure you address the three main areas outlined on pages 7 and 8.
- Support your case with evidence e.g. of councillor workload, volume of decisions and councillor representation in the community.
- Ensure that you have taken into account future trends and that the council size you suggest will still be right in future years.
- Find out more about council size in our more detailed guide for councillors and council staff at: <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/guidance>

Part two: electoral division patterns

Key dates:

Stage One - public consultation on new electoral division boundaries:

23 September 2014 - 1 December 2014

Draft recommendations - public consultation

12 May 2015 - 6 July 2015

We will carry out two phases of public consultation when we will invite you to present your proposals for new electoral division boundaries within your local authority.

The first phase will be our Stage One consultation which will ask for proposals on new division boundaries. We will use responses to that consultation to draw up draft recommendations for new boundaries across your area and we will hold a second phase of consultation on those proposals during which time you will be able to comment on them and propose alternatives.

The Commission will draw up new electoral arrangements that provide the best balance of our statutory criteria. The criteria include three main elements:

Statutory criteria

- **Delivering electoral equality for local voters** – this means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
- **Interests and identities of local communities** – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- **Effective and convenient local government** – this means ensuring that the electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole, including both the council size decision and electoral division arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

You should ensure that any proposal you make to the Commission, during either phase of consultation, takes into account the statutory criteria. The most persuasive cases are those that are also supported by evidence. Over the next five pages, you will find further explanation about the types of evidence the Commission usually receives under each of the criteria. This might help you build your own submission.

Delivering electoral equality for local voters

The Commission aims to deliver a pattern of divisions where each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.

We base decisions on the number of electors in a division and not the total population. The Commission's obligation, set out in law, is to deliver electoral equality where councillors represent a similar number of electors. This could not be achieved if we considered population statistics rather than electoral register totals.

Once the Commission has taken a view on council size, it gives us, and anyone interested in submitting proposals to the review, a clear idea of the target for achieving electoral equality for future patterns of electoral divisions.

Although we strive for perfect electoral equality for all divisions, we recognise that this is unlikely to be exactly achieved. If you propose a boundary that would lead to an electoral variance for the division (see exhibit 1), the Commission will need to see evidence that such electoral inequality is justified on the grounds of the Commission's other statutory criteria. The higher the level of electoral variance you are proposing for a division, the more persuasive your evidence will need to be.

The Commission has an obligation, set out in law, to consider electorate forecasts five years after the completion of the review. The purpose of the forecasts is to try and ensure that the review delivers electoral equality for voters in the longer term. We will work with council officers to draw up realistic forecasts for your authority. Further guidance on how we calculate projected electorates are available on our website at:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/10394/electorate-forecasts-guidance-2012.pdf

Exhibit one, over the page, shows an excerpt from the Buckinghamshire County Council review showing how the Commission calculates and presents electoral variances.

Table C1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Buckinghamshire County Council

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2017)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
42	Ridgeway West	1	7,806	7,806	0%	7,868	7,868	-3%
43	Ryemead & Micklefield	1	7,257	7,257	-7%	7,735	7,735	-5%
44	Terriers & Amersham Hill	1	7,344	7,344	-6%	7,849	7,849	-3%
45	The Risboroughs	1	7,538	7,538	-3%	8,202	8,202	1%
46	The Wooburns, Bourne End & Hedsor	1	8,333	8,333	7%	8,329	8,329	3%
47	Totteridge & Bowerdean	1	7,666	7,666	-2%	7,584	7,584	-7%
48	Tylers Green & Loudwater	1	8,012	8,012	3%	8,120	8,120	0%
49	West Wycombe	1	7,094	7,094	-9%	7,259	7,259	-11%
Totals		49	381,570	-	-	397,546	-	-
Averages		-	-	7,787	-	-	8,113	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Buckinghamshire County Council.

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

Exhibit 1: shows an extract from our final recommendations report for new electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire County Council. You can see from the table how the Commission calculates electoral variances for each proposed division based on the current electorate and forecast electorate.

You can read the full report, which includes the complete table of divisions at:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/10236/bucks-final-recommendations-report-final.pdf

Interests and identities of local communities

Unlike electoral equality, it isn't possible to measure levels of community identity so we will be looking for evidence on a range of issues to support your reasoning. The best evidence for community identity is normally a combination of factual information such as the existence of communication links, facilities and organisations along with an explanation of how local people use those facilities.

Below are some issues that we often use to assess community interests and identity. You may wish to use some of these examples to tell us why you are putting forward your view:

Transport links – Are there good communication links within the proposed division? Is there any form of public transport? If you are proposing that two areas (e.g. villages, estates or parishes) should be included in the same division together, how easily can you travel between them?

Parishes - In areas where parishes exist, the parish boundaries often represent the extent of a community. In fact, the Commission often uses parishes as the building blocks of electoral divisions. Parishes which share a secretariat or other arrangements often fit together well in the same electoral division.

Shared interests – Are there particular issues that affect your community which aren't necessarily relevant to neighbouring areas that might help us determine where a division boundary should be drawn? For example, many local authorities contain areas which have urban, suburban and rural characteristics. Each of those areas may have different needs and interests though they could be located next to each other. One area might be more affected by urban issues such as the local economy while an adjacent area might be more concerned with local transport matters. We would like to hear evidence about what those issues are and how they mean boundaries should combine or separate the areas in question.

Community groups – Is there a residents' group or any other local organisation that represents the area? What area does that group cover? What kind of activities do they undertake and are there any joint-working relationships between organisations that could indicate shared community interests between different geographical areas?

Facilities – Where do local people in your area go for shopping, medical services, leisure facilities etc? The location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community as do some service arrangements such as NHS commissioning groups. We would like to hear evidence from local people about how they interact with those facilities so that we can understand the shape of local communities and the movement and behaviours of their residents.

Identifiable boundaries – Natural features such as rivers can often provide strong and recognisable boundaries. Similarly, constructions such as major roads and railway lines can also form well known and effective barriers between communities.

These are issues you may wish to consider when proposing a pattern of electoral divisions or if you are commenting on the Commission's proposals. It is not – and is not intended to be – an exhaustive list of matters the Commission will consider when coming to a conclusion on divisions and their boundaries. Similarly, the Commission attaches no specific weighting to any of the issues above when taking decisions. This guide simply intends to provide some prompts for you to be able to have your say.

There are also a number of things the Commission does **not** consider to be strong evidence when it takes decisions. For example, an area's history and tradition may be the basis of a sense of community identity. However, communities change over time and perceptions can vary between individuals as to the nature of those ties. The Commission would need to hear how and why those traditional arrangements reflect communities **now**.

In addition, whilst social and economic data (e.g. from the census or other statistical sources) can tell you a lot about individuals living in an area, it doesn't necessarily explain the nature of communities and is often a poor guide their interests and identities. The Commission considers that this kind of evidence can provide useful background information for an area but we will treat it with caution when proposing new divisions and their boundaries.

Effective and convenient local government

We also consider whether an electoral division pattern would help deliver effective and convenient local government to people. If you are providing evidence to the Commission, there are a number of issues you might want to consider so that our recommendations can help us meet this obligation.

Size of division – we will look at the geographic size of the division and try to ensure that it is not so large that it would be difficult for a councillor to represent. Similarly, in urban areas, a division might be so small in area that its councillor might not be able to contribute effectively to the wider business of the council.

District council boundaries – if we are carrying out a review of a county council, electoral divisions will never cross the existing external district council boundary. This is a rule which is set out in law so that all electoral divisions will be wholly contained within a district.

Coterminosity – if the Commission is carrying out a review of a county council, we will try to match the boundary of the new electoral divisions – as far as possible – with the existing district ward boundaries. Where existing district ward boundaries match the boundaries of electoral divisions, we call it ‘coterminosity’ where coordination between the two councils in question can help to deliver effective and convenient local government.

‘Doughnut’ divisions – we occasionally receive proposals for a pattern of divisions which propose an ‘inner’ division and an ‘outer’ electoral division for a town or village. We will not normally recommend this kind of pattern because the communication links between the north and south of the outer division are usually poor and we also often find that people in the northern part of the outer division share higher levels of community identity with residents in the north of the inner division than with residents in the south of the outer division. Where we need to divide a town or village to achieve electoral equality, we will usually seek an alternative to this pattern.

Detached divisions – the Commission is sometimes presented with proposals to include two geographically separate areas in the same division. We will not usually accept a proposal of this kind, except in extraordinary geographical circumstances such as for offshore islands, as it is unlikely to meet our criteria for promoting community identity and interests or delivering effective and convenient local government.

Number of councillors for each electoral division

There is no limit, in law, to the number of councillors that can be elected to represent a ward or division. However, as a matter of policy, the Commission will not accept a proposal for more than three councillors to represent an electoral division as we do not think such an arrangement does not promote effective and convenient local government or local accountability.

For county councils, where whole-council elections are held every four years, the Commission is able to propose any pattern of divisions that it believes best meets its statutory criteria. This is usually a mixture of single-, two- and three-member electoral divisions although most county councils have a uniform pattern of single-member divisions.

Councils that elect by whole-council election are able formally to request a single-member division review. Such a request must be made to the Commission before the start of the Stage One consultation. In a single-member division review, the Commission will have a presumption in favour of a uniform pattern of single-member electoral divisions for the whole county.

How to have your say

An electoral review is a consultative process. You, and your community, can influence the outcome. We have an open mind about adopting proposals from groups or individuals that are supported by evidence and complement the statutory criteria.

In addition to the preliminary phase of the review, when we gather information about the council and assess your views on council size, we will hold at least two phases of public consultation.

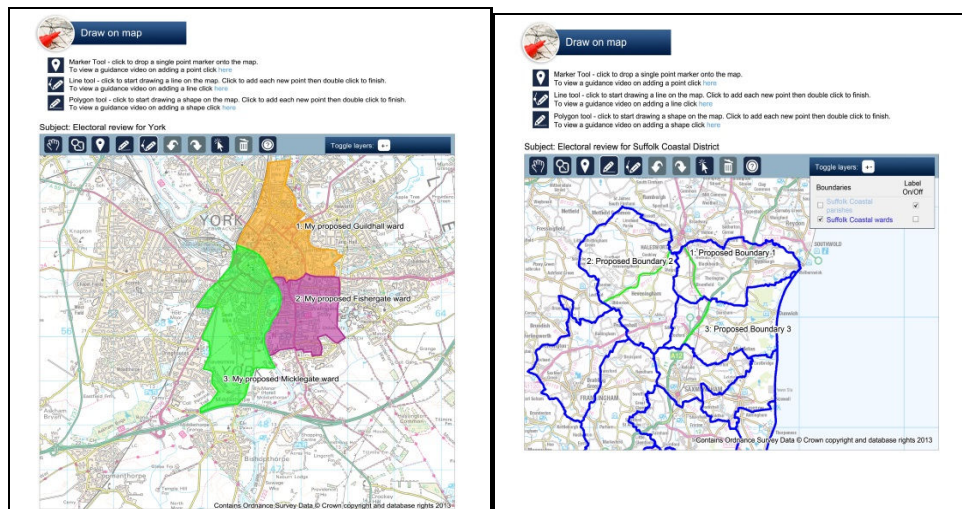
We encourage councillors to take part in each phase of consultation, as individuals or as groups, and we hope that elected members can also encourage communities to take part in consultation.

We are only able to consider evidence that is made to us in writing as all decisions are taken by formal meetings of the whole Commission. The best evidence includes the reasons why you agree with our proposals or why you disagree with them. If you do not think our proposals are right for your area, we would welcome alternative suggestions for boundaries that meet our criteria.

There are several ways in which you can keep up to date with the progress of the review and to have your say:

Website: you can keep track of the electoral review for your area through our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. We set up a dedicated web page for each review where you will find details of its timetable, our reports, maps, proposals and guidance. You can comment on our proposals directly through our website or by emailing: reviews@lgbce.org.uk. And you can write to us at the address shown on the contacts page (see page 25). We also publish all the submissions we receive so you can see what kind of evidence we relied on to make our decisions.

Interactive consultation portal: the portal allows you to view and interact with our maps as well as comment on our proposals directly. By logging on to consultation.lgbce.org.uk you will be able to view our proposals down to street level, draw your own pattern of divisions or annotate the maps to tell us about the nature of community interests and identities in your area. Over the page, you can see what the site looks like and how you might be able to put forward your views.



Log on to consultation.lgbce.org.uk to find out how you can interact with our mapping

Parishes and residents groups: if your area has parish councils, we will offer to hold a briefing meeting locally at the start of an electoral review with representatives of the parishes. Alternatively, we will consider offering a briefing meeting for residents associations at the start of a review to brief them on the process.

Members of Parliament: the Commission offers to brief all local MPs at each phase of consultation and will keep them updated on the progress of the review.

Lead commissioner: one of our commissioners will be appointed as lead commissioner for the review and will represent the Commission in meetings with the council though all decisions are taken by the Commission collectively. The lead commissioner and key staff will also conduct at least one tour of the local authority area to assess the issues 'on the ground' and areas of contention as we draw up recommendations.

Publicity: we will issue a press release at every stage of an electoral review to local press and media to encourage engagement in the process by local people. We will also ask the council to publicise the review. We will produce posters at each stage to be displayed in council offices, libraries and by parish councils and we will ensure that we produce hard copies of all our reports and maps for display in council buildings and libraries for those who do not have internet access. Follow us on Twitter [@LGBCE](https://twitter.com/LGBCE).

Community groups: at the start of a review, we will ask your local authority for information and contact details for local community groups and organisations that might be interested in the review and who might also wish to contribute to it. We will write to all those groups with information about the review at each stage and invite evidence from them. We will also ensure that we make contact with local organisations that represent minority groups that might otherwise have been excluded from the consultation process. We will provide translations and accessible versions of our material on request.

Making an effective representation

A persuasive representation to the Commission will usually:

- **Be submitted at the right time.** If you have a view on division boundaries, don't just wait until we have published draft recommendations. Make a submission during the Stage One consultation to ensure we can build in your proposal at the earliest possible stage.
- **Take account of our statutory criteria** (see page 9). The Commission will judge all submissions, and make recommendations, based on those criteria.
- **Consider the consequences of the proposal across the wider area.** Most proposals will have a knock on effect elsewhere in the county.
- **Be based on evidence.** Tell us *why* your view should be accepted and *how* your suggestion meets the criteria.
- **Suggest an alternative.** If you are objecting to a proposal, tell us where we should draw the boundaries.

Finally, the Commission welcomes submissions that support its recommendations as much as those that propose alternatives. It is very likely that people who oppose our draft recommendations will get in touch with the Commission to put forward their alternative proposals. So, if you support our recommendations, you should make sure you tell us so that we can balance the evidence.

Recent county reviews

The Commission's rolling programme of reviews means other county councils have been through the process in recent years. For the 2013 elections, eight county councils had new electoral arrangements as a result of reviews conducted by the Commission since 2010. You may find their experiences useful for a number of reasons:

- Read their council size submissions of all the counties to find out what arguments they put to the Commission and the evidence they provided.
- Learn how county councillors were allocated between districts.
- Find out how councils put their division patterns together and which proposals the Commission found persuasive.

Our website includes dedicated web pages for all previous electoral reviews and you can read all the evidence we received as well as our draft and final recommendations reports.

Some specific examples of recent county reviews include:

Buckinghamshire

The review recommended a reduction of eight councillors as proposed by the county council.

Buckinghamshire County Council also asked the Commission to carry out a single-member ward review and the final recommendations proposed a uniform pattern of 49 single-member divisions across the county.

You can find all the submissions, reports and maps associated with the review at:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/buckinghamshire/buckingham-county-council-fer>

Surrey

The review proposed an increase of one councillor to 81. During the course of the review, the Commission agreed to increase the number of county councillors by one to provide for a better allocation between districts.

Read all the papers here:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/surrey/surrey-county-council-fer>

Northamptonshire

The Commission agreed to a substantial reduction in council size to 57 (from 73). The final recommendations put forward a mixed pattern of single-, two- and three-member divisions.

Find out more here:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/east-midlands/northamptonshire/northamptonshire-county-council-fer>

Frequently asked questions

What characterises a good electoral review?

The best electoral reviews are those where the council and councillors have engaged with the process at an early stage.

On council size, authorities that have thought seriously about how they want to manage the business of the council and represent local people for the long term, usually put forward strong submissions.

Where local authorities and/or members have put together a division pattern that meets our statutory criteria and where the proposals are supported by evidence, we tend to be able to draw up recommendations that are largely built on consensus.

Councils that have been able to gain input from local groups and individuals on their proposals usually put forward a strong submission especially where it is supported by evidence.

What don't you consider in an electoral review?

Polling districts, school catchment areas, addresses and postcodes are not matters the Commission will take into account when drawing new electoral division boundaries. Although some existing divisions may have strong boundaries and reflect local communities, we start with a clean sheet of paper when drawing up recommendations.

We take no account of parliamentary constituency boundaries (see below for more details).

Similarly, we do not take into account possible political implications of our recommendations.

Why can't you consider boundaries at the same time as the number of councillors?

The Commission will make a judgment on council size before we consider division boundaries. This means that everybody who wishes to take part in the consultation will know the optimum number of electors per councillor which we need to achieve to deliver electoral equality in our pattern of divisions. If you do not know the total number of councillors who will be elected to the council, it makes it very difficult to come up with a proposal for a division pattern that will deliver this crucial statutory criterion.

On some occasions, the Commission will alter its view on council size in its draft or final recommendations by one councillor if that number provides for a scheme of electoral divisions which better reflects our statutory criteria.

How much will the review cost?

The Commission does not charge local authorities to undertake an electoral review and our funding is agreed by the Speaker's Committee in the House of Commons.

Every review is different and some are more resource intensive than others. For example, a county will require more resources than a small district in terms of the quantity of maps, time spent drawing up recommendations and consultation materials.

Like most other public sector organisations, the Commission is under an obligation to reduce costs. Since 2010, the Commission has reduced its budget by around 30% in real terms and will make further savings in the coming years.

My division has the right number of electors already. Will it change?

Changes to division boundaries are usually extensive in every review we conduct. For example, if we propose to change council size in a significant way, it is unlikely that your division will then contain the optimum councillor: elector ratio. In addition, the knock on effects of changing boundaries in one part of the local authority can have an impact elsewhere which usually leads to substantial changes.

If you wish to retain an existing boundary, you should tell us why such an arrangement complements the statutory criteria.

Will you look at the external boundaries of the council?

No. The electoral review will only consider internal electoral division boundaries. External boundaries can only be changed through a different type of review: a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR).

More details on PABRs can be found on our website at http://www.lgbce.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/10402/pabr-technical-guidance.pdf

Will parliamentary constituency boundaries be affected?

Reviews of constituency boundaries are the responsibility of the Boundary Commission for England which is a separate body and operates under different legislation. You can find out more about their work on their website at: boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/.

The Commission has no obligation to consider constituency boundaries as we draw up recommendations. As such, there is a possibility that new divisions could cross constituency boundaries.

Will parishes be affected?

We have no powers to alter the external boundaries of local parishes. However, if our recommendations propose to divide parishes between divisions, we will alter the electoral arrangements of that parish to create parish wards. We can also make changes to the years in which parish council elections take place so that they do so in the same years as district elections in their associated divisions.

More information about possible implications for parishes are set out in our technical guidance:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/10411/technical-guidance-july-2013-web-version.pdf

Can the council veto your recommendations?

No. We will work consultatively with you throughout the review and seek to build consensus. However, the final recommendations of the review are those of the Commission. After we publish our final recommendations, we will lay a draft order – the legal document that seeks to implement the recommendations – in both Houses of Parliament. It is up to Parliament to approve or reject that draft order before it is implemented.

Will you hold public meetings and/or meet with political groups during the process?

We will always brief a meeting of the full council in the early stages of the review. We will also offer a briefing meeting with local parishes and/or residents groups.

During the rest of the review, we will not usually offer to meet any groups or individuals. We try to ensure that everyone has an equal chance of influencing the Commission during consultation and, as such, we do not want to be seen to favour any group by holding meetings to which other interested parties do not have access.

Why don't you consider the population of electoral divisions and not just the electorate?

The Commission has a statutory obligation under the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009* 'to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council'. This means that we can only consider the number of local government electors when we draw up boundaries which will deliver electoral equality.

In what forms do you accept submissions?

The Commission only accepts submissions which are made in writing by hard copy, email or through our website. The Commission takes decisions collectively and will consider every submission received before coming to a conclusion.

You can also use our consultation portal to draw your own boundaries and submit them directly to the Commission. You are strongly advised to include an explanation of why the boundaries you are putting forward are appropriate and complement our statutory criteria.

Submissions to the Commission are rarely persuasive if they are not supported by an explanation of how the proposal meets the Commission's statutory criteria. As such, petitions which simply object to a proposal do not usually constitute strong evidence on which the Commission can base alternative recommendations. In the same way, resolutions of council which do not provide for alternative arrangements that are supported by a rationale will not normally prove to be persuasive.

To what extent do you change your recommendations during the process and as a result of consultation?

Since the establishment of the Commission as a stand-alone body in April 2010, the Commission has made amendments to its draft recommendations in most cases as a result of submission received during consultation. We consider every submission and believe the electoral review process is strongest where local authorities have engaged in it.

How will you involve local people in the review?

We will engage with local press and media at every stage of consultation through press releases and social media. We also publish all relevant information on our website, including every submission we receive. Our new online consultation portal allows users of the site to draw their own boundaries and engage in the process in a detailed way.

If your area has parishes, we will engage directly with them through a briefing meeting and via correspondence to alert them to each phase of consultation. Similarly, we have asked the council for their help in identifying local residents groups and organisations so we can write to them with advice and guidance on the review.

We have also asked the council to help us publicise the review by using its own communication channels with residents and local groups and we will provide posters to display in council buildings. We hope elected members can also use their networks to engage communities in the process.

Do ward and electoral division boundaries need to match?

When we are conducting a review of a county council, we will seek to provide for coterminosity between district wards and county divisions. However, the aim to deliver coterminosity does not override our other statutory criteria which can be found on page 9. This means that we some district wards could cross electoral division boundaries as part of our recommendations.

For county reviews, no electoral division will cross the external district boundary.

Contacts

The key contacts for the electoral review of Kent County Council are:

Mark Cooper – Review Officer
mark.cooper@lgbce.org.uk
Tel: 020 7664 8535

Richard Buck – Review Manager
richard.buck@lgbce.org.uk
Tel: 020 7664 8511

If you want to send in a submission on the review:

Address:

Kent review
Local Government Boundary
Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Send us views directly through the
online consultation portal:
consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Website:
www.lgbce.org.uk

Email:
mark.cooper@lgbce.org.uk

Twitter:
[@LGBCE](https://twitter.com/LGBCE)

Further reading:

Our website: www.lgbce.org.uk – here you will be able to find the dedicated web page for your review which will tell you the timetable, representations received and all reports, maps and other information on the review.

Our consultation portal: consultation.lgbce.org.uk – here you can have your say directly at each stage of public consultation. Interactive maps will be available as we prepare new boundaries where you can draw your own divisions and send them to us.

Technical guidance:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/10411/technical-guidance-july-2013-web-version.pdf - is our formal guidance on electoral reviews.

Council size guide:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/10390/council-size-guide.pdf - a more detailed guide on how to approach council size which includes some prompts to stimulate debate.

Electoral Divisions in Kent

Name of ward	Cllr	Electorate 2013	Variance 2013
Ashford			
Ashford Central	1	12,289	-6%
Ashford East	1	12,796	-2%
Ashford Rural East	1	12,226	-7%
Ashford Rural South	1	13,680	5%
Ashford Rural West	1	15,156	16%
Ashford South	1	12,732	-3%
Tenterden	1	12,057	-8%
Canterbury			
Canterbury City North East	1	11,802	-10%
Canterbury City South West	1	12,724	-3%
Canterbury South East	1	13,933	6%
Canterbury West	1	12,314	-6%
Herne & Sturry	1	13,396	2%
Herne Bay	2	22,948	-12%
Whitstable	2	26,082	0%
Dartford			
Dartford East	1	9,770	-25%
Dartford North East	1	11,549	-12%
Dartford Rural	1	12,760	-2%
Dartford West	1	13,167	1%
Swanscombe & Greenhithe	1	12,090	-8%
Wilmington	1	13,279	1%
Dover			
Deal	2	22,840	-13%
Dover North	1	12,909	-1%
Dover Town	2	22,139	-15%
Dover West	1	13,580	4%
Sandwich	1	13,830	6%
Gravesham			
Gravesham East	2	29,111	11%
Gravesham Rural	1	16,461	26%
Northfleet & Gravesend West	2	28,929	11%
Maidstone			
Maidstone Central	2	28,695	10%
Maidstone North East	1	13,058	0%
Maidstone Rural East	1	13,490	3%
Maidstone Rural North	1	14,440	10%
Maidstone Rural South	1	11,047	-16%
Maidstone Rural West	1	13,963	7%
Maidstone South	1	13,524	3%
Maidstone South East	1	12,078	-8%
Sevenoaks			
Darent Valley	1	12,756	-3%
Sevenoaks Central	1	13,473	3%
Sevenoaks East	1	12,462	-5%
Sevenoaks North East	1	14,380	10%
Sevenoaks South	1	12,202	-7%

Sevenoaks West	1	12,411	-5%
Swanley	1	11,490	-12%
Shepway			
Elham Valley	1	15,631	19%
Folkestone North East	1	12,516	-4%
Folkestone South	1	12,720	-3%
Folkestone West	1	12,068	-8%
Hythe	1	11,974	-8%
Romney Marsh	1	17,908	37%
Swale			
Faversham	1	14,474	11%
Sheerness	1	12,795	-2%
Sheppey	1	14,976	14%
Swale Central	2	27,544	5%
Swale East	1	14,655	12%
Swale West	1	13,563	4%
Thanet			
Birchington & Villages	1	13,705	5%
Broadstairs & Sir Moses Montefiore	2	23,067	-12%
Margate & Cliftonville	2	22,825	-13%
Margate West	1	12,341	-6%
Ramsgate	2	26,384	1%
Tonbridge & Malling			
Malling Central	1	12,053	-8%
Malling North	1	13,380	2%
Malling Rural East	1	13,397	2%
Malling Rural North East	1	14,842	13%
Malling West	1	12,173	-7%
Tonbridge	2	25,599	-2%
Tunbridge Wells			
Cranbrook	1	11,629	-11%
Tunbridge Wells East	1	13,314	2%
Tunbridge Wells North	1	13,860	6%
Tunbridge Wells Rural	1	15,384	18%
Tunbridge Wells South	1	14,207	9%
Tunbridge Wells West	1	14,001	7%

Map

The existing electoral arrangements for Kent County Council are included on a map over the page. We have included the current electoral variances on the map to give you an idea of how divisions might need to change during the review.

