

From: Graham Gibbens, Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
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To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee – 24 November 2016

Subject: Ashford Borough Council – Community Governance Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report updates Members about the community governance review undertaken by Ashford Borough Council in 2015 and the proposal to make minor alterations to the county electoral divisions in Ashford in advance of 2017 County Council election.

1. Introduction

- (1) Principal councils (district councils or unitary councils) have the power to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community (parish) governance arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. A review can consider a number of issues including the creation of a new parish, altering the boundary of an existing parish or grouping a number of parishes together in a grouped parish council.
- (2) Ashford Borough Council conducted a Community Governance Review of the whole borough in 2015. The final recommendations were considered and approved at a meeting of the full council on 10 December 2015. The Ashford Borough (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order No 1 was made on 23 September 2016 and will come into force on 1 April 2019 in advance of the next borough election.
- (3) The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is responsible for making 'consequential changes' - any related alterations to district ward or county division boundaries following a parish boundary changes as a result of a community governance review.
- (4) In October 2016 the LGBCE notified Kent County Council that it was carrying out a review of the borough boundaries in Ashford. The LGBCE stated:

“Normally, this would not affect the county divisions. However, the borough council has recently completed a Community Governance Review (CGR) Order which divorces the parish boundaries from the electoral divisions in several places. This causes problems as it creates a number of parish wards with no electors in.

In order to solve this, the Commission will need to make a related alterations order to move the electoral divisions on to the new parishes.

These changes need to be requested by the borough council, but will need to be approved by the county council”.

- (5) This Committee has responsibility for dealing with all matters relating to reviews of local government boundaries. The LGBCE has subsequently stated that a letter from Kent County Council confirming this Committee’s approval of these changes would be adequate for their purposes.
- (6) Once the LGBCE receives the KCC letter, along with mapping and other information from Ashford Borough Council, the Commission will discuss the related alterations. If agreed, the LGBCE will then make the related alterations Order, inform Ordnance Survey and make changes to mapping. It is proposed that the alterations Order would be made and come into force on 4 May 2017 – the date of the next County Council election in May 2017.
- (7) If the Committee does not approve the alterations to the county electoral divisions, a number of parish wards would be created with very few or no electors in; this would result in difficulties in administering elections and establishing parish councils in these new wards.
- (8) The differences between the affected Kent County Council boundaries in Ashford and the parish boundaries which were amended as part of the 2015 Ashford Borough Council Community Governance Review are detailed in Appendix 1 with an explanatory note and five maps.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to approve the alterations to the county electoral divisions in Ashford as detailed in Appendix 1 and agree that a letter be sent to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England confirming the Committee’s approval of these changes.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Explanatory Note and Maps

Background Documents

Ashford Borough Council (2016) '*Community Governance Review (01/01/2016)*', <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/community-governance-review>

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (2016) '*About Community Governance Reviews (01/01/2016)*', <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/about-us/about-reviews/about-community-go>

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