

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16th December, 2014

2.30 pm

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





AGENDA

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 December 2014, at 2.30 pm
Medway Room, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone

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

Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting

Membership (9)

- Conservative (5): Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A J King, MBE (Vice-Chairman),
Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier and Mrs P A V Stockell
- UKIP (2) Mr M Baldock and Mr A Terry
- Labour (1) Mr R Truelove
- Liberal Democrat (1): Mr I S Chittenden

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

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- 1 Substitutes
- 2 Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda
- 3 Minutes - 7 July 2014 (Pages 7 - 8)
- 4 Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area - Progress Report (Pages 9 - 16)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Monday, 8 December 2014

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 7 July 2014.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A J King, MBE (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Baldock, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr P J Oakford (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Mr C P Smith (Substitute for Mr D L Brazier), Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr A Terry and Mr R Truelove

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G Cooke, Mr G Lymer and Mr J N Wedgbury

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)), Mr R Hallett (Head of Business Intelligence), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**22. Minutes - 5 June 2014**
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area
(Item 4)

(1) Mr Sass introduced the draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on Council Size. The submission had been produced in accordance with the decision of the Committee at their meeting on 5 June 2014 to propose that Council size remained at 84 Members and noting a preference for single Member divisions where possible. The Committee was invited to comment on, amend as necessary and approve the draft for submission to the County Council on 17 July 2014.

(2) Mr Sass referred to the detailed population forecasts for 2020 which indicated an increased average number of electors per division of 850. He thanked Members for participating in the survey referred to in paragraph 24 of the submission.

(3) A Member reminded the Committee that a number of Districts would have new ward boundaries with effect from May 2015 following Electoral Boundary Reviews.

(4) The Committee discussed the preference for single Member divisions and how this should be worded in the draft submission. There was no amendment agreed to the wording in the draft submission.

(5) RESOLVED that the draft submission to the LGBCE on Council Size, Appendix A to the report, be recommended to the County Council for approval at its meeting on 17 July 2014.

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From: Graham Gibbens, Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
Geoff Wild, Director of Governance & Law and County Returning Officer

To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee – 16 December 2014

Subject: Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area – Progress Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report advises the Committee of the decision of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on council size and confirms the revised timetable for Kent's boundary review.

1. Introduction

- (1) At its meeting on 17 July 2014, the County Council approved the formal submission on council size as recommended by this Committee. The submission concluded that Kent County Council should remain at 84 Members and the LGBCE was asked to note the County Council's preference for single Member divisions where possible. During the summer, the LGBCE sought further information from the Council to justify its view on council size and this was provided to the LGBCE, following consultation with Committee Members.
- (2) On 21 October 2014, the LGBCE wrote to the Head of Paid Service, advising that insufficient information had been provided to justify maintaining a council size of 84. However, whilst the LGBCE was provisionally minded to adopt a council size of 81, it wanted to give the Council a further opportunity to provide evidence to justify maintaining a council size of 84.
- (3) Accordingly, a meeting took place at County Hall on 10 November with Group Leaders, the Chairman of this committee, the lead Commissioner for Kent's review, Sir Tony Redmond, together with relevant officers. At the meeting, Members expressed the view that a council size of 84 was appropriate given the projected increase in Kent's population to 2020; the heavy and increasing workload of elected Members and the expanding role of Members in commissioning. A letter was sent on behalf of Group Leaders following the meeting (**Appendix A**).
- (4) The LGBCE's response was received on 1 December, which confirmed the decision for a council size of 81 (**Appendix B**).

2. Consultation timetable

- (1) In the letter sent on behalf of Group Leaders to the LGBCE on 13 November, a formal request was made for the phase 1 consultation on division boundaries to commence after the Christmas and New Year holidays. However, the LGBCE was unable to agree to that request on the basis that they did not want the end of the phase 1 consultation period to go into the purdah period for next year's Parliamentary and Local Elections. The revised timetable for Kent's review, as supplied by the LGBCE on 5 December, is therefore as follows:

Stage 1 consultation start	Stage 1 consultation end	LGBCE mtg	Draft recs consultation start	Draft recs consultation end	LGBCE mtg	End of review (final recs published)	Order Laying date
09/12/14	02/03/15	21/04/15	12/05/15	06/07/15	08/09/15	29/09/15	November 2015

- (2) The Committee will also be aware that there are a small number of District Councils in Kent, which are in the process of implementing their own boundary reviews and which has meant re-drawing ward and polling district boundaries in many areas. The LGBCE require electorate forecasts to 2020 down to polling district level for the phase 1 consultation on division boundaries, together with parish electorate numbers and full electoral registers. Regular communication has taken place between the Council and the LGBCE in relation to the likelihood of all of this work being completed by the District Councils in time for the start of the consultation period on 9 December. At the time of writing this report, the position is that the 12 District and Borough Councils in Kent have supplied all of the information requested by the LGBCE with the exception of Swale, which will not be able to supply its updated electoral registers and revised polling district data until February 2015. This delay means that the Business Intelligence Unit has been unable to provide forecasts for the new polling districts in Swale and that the return to the LGBCE is, at the present time, still based on the "old" Swale polling districts.
- (3) The LGBCE has stated that if not all of the required information is available by the beginning of the consultation period, they will press ahead with the phase 1 consultation and upload further information to their website as soon as it is made available to them.

3. Conclusions

- (1) It is disappointing that the County Council was unable to secure the LGBCE's agreement to the phase 1 consultation starting in the New Year, but the length of the phase 1 consultation (9 December 2014 to 2 March 2015) is reasonable, even bearing in mind the Christmas and New Year holidays. However, of most concern is the proposed completion dates for the new electoral registers and revised polling district data in Swale, which impacts adversely on the ability of respondents to the consultation to prepare and submit their own division boundary

proposals. The LGBCE has been made aware of this latest position with regard to Swale and has commented that, whilst it is far from ideal, they cannot support a further delay to the beginning of the phase 1 consultation. The LGBCE also states that information to be published on 9 December on its website: (www.lgbce.org.uk) will enable respondents to undertake some work in relation to their own proposals, but that this will be subject to change once the revised data is available in the New Year.

<p>Recommendation: The Committee is invited to note the progress on the Boundary Review of Kent County Council's area and comment accordingly.</p>

Background Documents:

Previous update reports to the Electoral Boundary Committee and the County Council

Report author contact details:

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
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peter.sass@kent.gov.uk

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To: Sir Tony Redmond
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
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London EC1M 5LG

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Direct Dial/Ext: (01622) 694302
Fax: (01622) 694383
Email: peter.sass@kent.gov.uk
Ask for: Peter Sass

Date: 13 November 2014

Dear Sir Tony,

Kent County Council Boundary Review

On behalf of KCC's political group leaders, thank you for visiting County Hall on Monday of this week for the purpose of providing us with a further opportunity to provide evidence to justify a Council size of 84, in light of your recommendation that it should reduce to 81.

The group leaders were of the view that, by basing your recommendation that the council size should be restricted to 81, simply because this is near the maximum figure currently shown in the range of Kent's 'family' of CIPFA of local authority partners, leaves us with the overriding impression that the Commission's rationale is based predominantly on statistical convenience and little else. The group leaders were keen to be assured that account has been taken of Kent's local circumstances as set out in the County Council's very detailed submission on council size, which detailed the onerous governance arrangements at Member level and the heavy and increasing workload of all Members, both in relation to formal meetings and locally in their divisions, not to mention the significant projected increase in the electorate population increase expected in Kent compared with many of its CIPFA comparators.

The ratio of electors to Kent County Councillors within the CIPFA group is already one of the highest. If the council size for Kent County Council is 81, this will only make this ratio even more disproportionate, as the attached table shows. We are concerned at the significant impact this will have on the ability of Members to continue to serve increasingly large numbers of electors, at the same time as being much more involved in commissioning, and also concerned from the electorate's point of view about getting access to and help from their local County Member. The Commission needs to explain in far greater detail their decision on Council size from this "democratic deficit" point of view.

We spoke on Monday about the County Council's decision to move to being a strategic commissioning authority, which will involve all Members working harder and in different ways. A new cross-party Commissioning Advisory Board has been set up since the Council's submission to the Commission on Council size, which will meet fortnightly and meeting dates have already been scheduled for the next 12 months. This is clear evidence of the strength of the Member-led authority here in Kent and the desire of all Members to be involved at a much earlier stage in deliberating and making recommendations as to how services should be commissioned going forward. The new approach to commissioning will also mean heavier workloads for other Committees, notably Cabinet Committees and the Scrutiny Committee, although this hasn't yet been quantified.

The point was also made about the ability of the County Council to deal effectively and successfully with any new powers that might be transferred to the regions in any future decision of Central Government on devolution. Reducing the Council size at this stage would be premature.

Whilst writing, I would like to reiterate that 4 of the 12 District and Borough Councils in Kent will not be in a position to release polling district information before 1 December because of their own boundary reviews, which then needs to be analysed in relation to electorate forecasts. Polling District information is crucial for political parties and others to be able to make their own recommendations and suggestions on division proposals and it is, therefore, our very strong view that the phase 1 consultation on division boundaries should not begin until the New Year to avoid having a consultation period that runs over the Christmas and New Year period.

I look forward to hearing from you following the Commission's Board meeting next week.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Sass', written in a cursive style.

Mr Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services

David Cockburn
Corporate Director of Strategic and Corporate Services and Head of Paid Services
Kent County Council
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

1 December 2014

Dear Mr Cockburn

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF KENT

As you are aware, the Commission met on the 18 November to consider the appropriate council size for Kent County Council.


The Commission originally considered the appropriate council size for Kent at its meeting on 21 October 2014, where the Commission took the view it had not received sufficient information to justify retaining a council size of 84. The Commission uses the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Nearest Neighbour Model as an aid when deciding on the appropriate council size for authorities. Kent County Council has 84 members and this is out of range when compared to the 15 others in its group according to the CIPFA model. In these circumstances, the Commission requires a strong and compelling case to be put forward to justify a council size that is out of range. In cases where we do not believe the council has made a sufficiently strong case to adopt a council size which is significantly different from its nearest neighbours, we will seek to recommend a council size which is nearer to that of other authorities within the relevant CIPFA grouping.

Therefore, the Commission wrote the council subsequent to its October meeting to outline its concerns and propose a further meeting be held between group leaders and the lead Commissioner Sir Tony Redmond.

At its November meeting, the Commission was given a minute of this meeting held at your offices on 10 November 2014 and your subsequent correspondence. It gave careful consideration to the points that were raised and all the other available evidence and concluded that it should formally adopt a council size of 81. This will provide a good allocation of members across the county as well as being within the range of the 15 authorities with the most similar attributes to Kent as per the Commissions policy in this area.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mark Cooper should you have any further questions regarding the review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jolyon Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jolyon Jackson
Chief Executive

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020 7664 8537