

**Body:** Council

**Date:** 18 November 2015

**Subject:** Boundary Review

**Report of:** Senior Head of Corporate Development and Governance

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**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose:** To recommend the proposals of the formally appointed Working Group in respect of Borough wards in accordance with the requirements of part 2 of the 2015 boundary review being conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

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**Recommendations:** To approve the recommendations of the Working Group, specifically:

- (a) To determine whether to approve option A (no change to existing wards); or option B (involving boundary adjustments to Hampden Park, Old Town and Ratton wards); or option C (no formal Council submission) as set out in the recommendations in the working group's appended report.
  - (b) To approve the recommendation that there be no change to existing ward names.
  - (c) To endorse the view of the working group for the need to address current anomalies in the existing Borough boundary.
  - (d) To authorise the Senior Head of Corporate Development and Governance to submit the decision to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Council.
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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is required to undertake an electoral boundary review of East Sussex County Council. In addition, reviews need to be conducted in Wealden District and Hastings Borough as part of the process as, in both authorities, electorate imbalance in wards/divisions has triggered the need for such a review.

## **2.0 County-Wide Proposals**

- 2.1 Although there is no current sufficient level of electoral imbalance to trigger the requirement for such a review in Eastbourne, Lewes or Rother, the Commission has asked to review the whole County at the same time.
- 2.2 Due to the simultaneous reviews being conducted county-wide, consistency of approach has been overseen by a joint officer project team with representatives from all the authorities. However, within the bigger picture, each Borough/District is required to construct its own review proposal. This was last undertaken in Eastbourne in 2000.
- 2.3 Essentially, there are two parts to the review, firstly where we make proposals in respect of the size of the Council and, secondly, where we make proposals in respect of ward numbers, boundaries and names. In both cases, the Council needs to supply robust evidence in respect of electorate equality and forecasts and whether the wards reflect significant communities, themes and landmarks.

## **3.0 Review Part 1 – Council Size**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 27 May 2015, the Council unanimously approved the proposal that no change be made to the Council size of 27. This was submitted to the Boundary Commission and has been accepted.
- 3.2 At the same meeting, Council approved the creation of a working group comprising Councillors Jenkins, Tester and Ungar to liaise with the designated lead officer on the work required for part 2.

## **4.0 Review Part 2 – Wards and Boundaries**

- 4.1 The Working Group has undertaken a great deal of detailed work in analysing potential scenarios for change. This was essential as, even in the event that minimal or no change is recommended, the Council needs to demonstrate a robust case for arriving at that position.
- 4.2 The final report of the Working Group is appended to this report (appendix 1) and the Council is asked to formally determine the options and approve its recommendations. In arriving at its recommendations, the Working Group had due regard to the key overarching issue of electorate equality, and associated issues of community cohesion and strong natural boundaries.
- 4.3 The designated lead officer has a duty to ensure that any Council submission

meets the objectives set by the Commission.

- 4.4 As can be seen, the Working Group was divided in its final recommendations on ward boundaries and, as a result, Council is required to choose between three options. It is unfortunate that unanimity has not been achieved. Nevertheless, the basis for all the options being proposed is valid.

## **5.0 Consultation and Time Line**

- 5.1 Internally, members of the Working Group have been liaising with their wider political groups throughout the process. In accordance with a County-wide agreement, details of how to participate in, and contribute to, the boundary review process was posted on the Council's website with a link to the relevant Boundary Commission page. In addition, the draft proposals developed by the Working Group for Eastbourne were also posted on the Council's website for information. Both of these pieces of information were promoted via press release in the Eastbourne Herald. Further, the Boundary Commission will be publishing and consulting on all proposals received, including the Council's submission.
- 5.2 All submission proposals (including the Council's) need to be submitted to the Commission by the end of November 2015. A final decision from the Commission is expected in February 2016, and the first elections that the new ward arrangements will be used for are the County Council elections in 2017.

## **6.0 Implications**

- 6.1 There are no environmental or financial implications arising from this report. However, whilst the arrangements regarding ward boundaries are primarily an administrative process, it is important to have regard to the potential knock-on effects in respect of equality. In the event that option B is chosen by the Council and accepted by the Boundary Commission, there will be a need for considerable work in assessing current polling district boundaries and analysing the location of polling stations as a result of the changes. This is important in order to ensure that all electors retain reasonable accessibility to suitably located and designed polling stations. Finally, there will need to be considerable work in updating a number of our systems including APP, GIS, W2, LLP, EasySite (Council Website), and EROS (the electoral registration system).

## **7.0 Summary**

- 7.1 The Council will need to make a decision between the option of no change on the basis that the degree of electorate variance does not justify it, or a proposal to adjust boundaries in 3 areas to improve the variance figure of Hampden Park and improve a community boundary between Ratton and Old Town, or the option of no formal submission on the basis that the Working Group was unable to reach a consensus on these options. The Working Group was united in agreeing no change to existing ward names and that we should formally record the need for the borough boundary to be reviewed at the earliest opportunity.

**Peter Finnis**

**Senior Head of Corporate Development and Governance**

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**Background Papers:**

- Electorate Data – Current electoral register
- Development Data – Planning and housing future forecasts from EBC and ESCC
- Boundary Commission Guidance documents
- Eastbourne Boundary Review 2000 – content and justifications

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