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BOUNDARY AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2023 at 1.00 pm at Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Jack Packman (Chair); Councillors D Green, Kup, Everitt and Wright

6. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Green seconded and Members agreed that Councillor Jack Packman be the Chair of the Boundaries and Electoral Arrangements Working Party.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Will Scobie, substituted by Councillor Everitt.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

9. INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager gave a presentation to the working party and made the following points:

- It was important to start work now due to the number of activities to be undertaken for the review;
- Periodically the Local Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) (the Commission) reviews electoral boundaries;
- Thanet last had its review in 2001;
- Such reviews should be done every eight years;
- The purpose of these reviews is to address the poor levels of electoral equality;
- There was a need to ensure that all wards were within 10% of all of the electors in the district;
- For example, Bradstowe Ward had -11% whilst Salmerstone had +11% and Pegwell Ward had +12%. This review was meant to address these inequalities;
- The Council had to submit to the Commission the following documents:
 - Geocoded electoral register;
 - Geocoded polling district map;
 - Forecast electorate for 2030 by polling district;
 - Details of electorate parish arrangements.
- All these documents should be provided by 30 January 2024;
- The Council would need to create a database of the following interest groups:
 - Neighbourhood forums;
 - Hard to reach groups;
 - Civil societies;
 - Single issue groups;
 - Public bodies.
- The review process was divided into two parts:
 - To determine the councillor numbers;
 - To determine the ward arrangements.

- The council would then need to create a representation document indicating their view regarding the above;
- The proposals should be for a sufficient number of councillors to enable effective decision making; i.e. the Council should end up with enough councillors to have adequate committee memberships on various Council committees that include Scrutiny, Planning, Cabinet and Outside bodies and partnerships;
- These representations needed to be evidence based and had to be based on the correct evidence;
- The draft representation document had to be submitted by 02 January 2024;
- The finalised document had to be submitted by 20 January 2024;
- Other interested parties or bodies could still submit their representations to the Commission;
- Ward patterns needed to be within 10% of each ward's elector numbers in order to attain equality for voters;
- These proposals had to factor in community identities and interest;
- These proposals should aim to build effective and convenient local government structures;
- There should be no major infrastructure barriers like a railway line cutting through the ward;
- The consultation on ward patterning would be from 19 March 2024 to 27 May 2024;
- Consultation of the draft recommendations would be from 03 September 2024 to 11 November 2024;
- The finalised recommendations from the review would be published in February 2025;
- The Parliamentary Order to amend the district electoral boundaries would be made in Spring 2025;
- The new electoral boundaries arrangements would be used for the Local Government elections in May 2027;
- The outcome of this review should create effective representation. Proposals should be rational and not assertions. The Commission would like to know what the district wanted not what it did not want. They would like the Council to present practical examples to back up proposals;
- The Commission would not be considering political consequences, parliamentary boundaries, post codes, addresses or house prices.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- Will the review take into account new housing development?
- Were parish boundaries important for this exercise?
- Council data bases within the Council's possession like from Regeneration and Community Services be used for this review?
- Council the Council put forward new names for new wards?
- At this stage there was a need for the Council to come up with a consensus position regarding the number of councillors that the Council would like to propose;
- Was the Council allowed to propose the number of councillors for each ward?

Nick Hughes responded as follows:

- It was about forecasting the elector number by 2030 and yes, any housing development would be taken into consideration as long as it was realistic to indicate that such housing would be occupied by 2030;

- Parish boundaries were important but they were not part of the building block for this review;
- The data bases that the Council held could be used;
- The Commission relied on the local communities for names of wards;
- Officers would go back to check with the Commission if it was acceptable for the Council to propose the number of councillors for each ward.

More detail was contained in the presentation slides attached to this minute item.

Members noted the presentation.

10. TIMETABLE FOR THE LGBCE REVIEW

Nick Hughes introduced the item and made the following comments:

- What was being proposed in the timetable was Phase 1 set of activities;
- The final content of the representation document had to be agreed by Full Council;
- It was therefore worth noting that when considering the timetable and various deadlines discussed earlier, Members had to factor in the deadline for Full Council to have approved the representations to forward to the Commission;
- This meant that for the Council to submit the draft representations document on 2 January 2024, Full Council had to approve the draft recommendations at the meeting on 7 December 2023;
- Once the council got some feedback from the Commission, then the working party would lead Phase 2 of the review activities.

Members made comments as follows:

- One Member said that the working party had two political parties on its membership. It would be good to have views from members of the other political parties on the Council;
- They said that Members not on the sub group could attend future working party meetings and speak under 20.1;
- Alternatively, the working party could invite members to come and make their representations for the working to take into consideration when drafting its report;

Councillor Wright proposed, Councillor Kup seconded and Members agreed that the working party hold one or two more meetings to formalise its work plan before inviting Members not on the working to make representations.

11. THE NEXT STEPS

Nick Hughes said that after this first meeting, Democratic Services were now going ahead to collate information that would be used for an informed discussion by the working party. Evidence would be used to support any recommendations that would be drafted by the working party.

Nick Hughes further advised Members that the Council should not necessarily compare itself with other Council and use that as the only measure for arriving at a proposed number of councillors for the district as this would not be acceptable for the review.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Kup seconded and Members agreed that a figure between thirty-six (36) and forty-four (44) be used as the baseline for calculating a recommended figure of the total number of councillors being proposed for the revised ward boundaries for Thanet.

Democratic Services would be presenting a report with details on the councillor numbers proposed above at the next working party meeting in September.

Meeting concluded: 1.50 pm

Thanet District Council



LGBCE Electoral Review

BEAWP - 22 August 2023

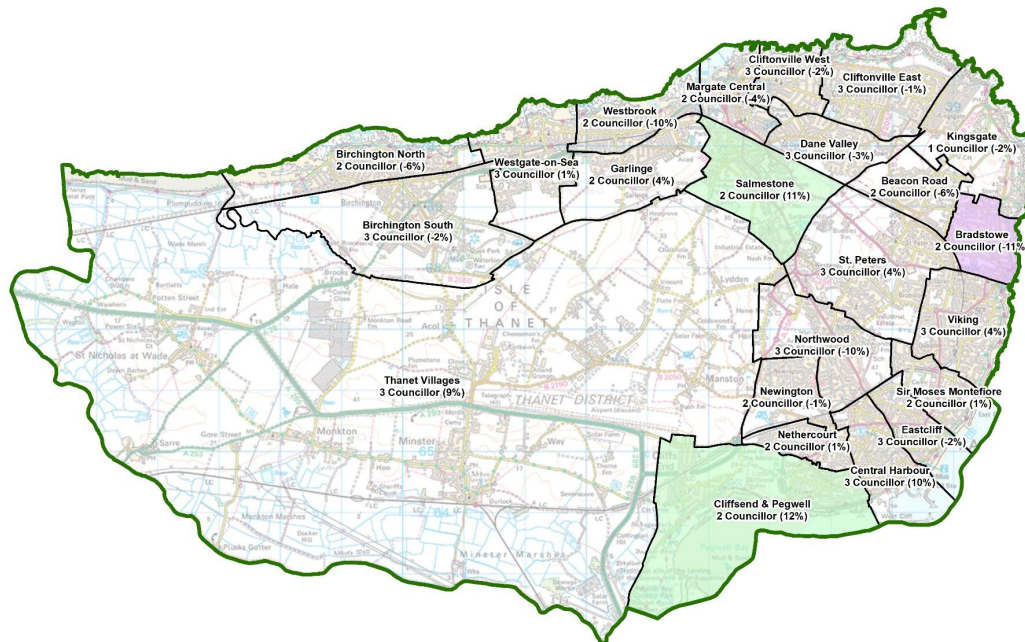
What does an Electoral Review Determine?

Electoral Reviews are carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on a periodic basis. They review the following:

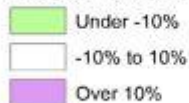
- Total number of councillors
- Total number of wards
- Ward boundaries
- Number of councillors elected to each ward
- Names of each ward

Why Thanet?

- Thanet's boundaries have not been reviewed since 2001.
- This review will also address the poor levels of electoral equality in the authority.



Current Variance (%)



Preliminary Period - Electoral Data

The LGBCE will require:

- Recent electoral register
- Geocoded electoral register
- Geocoded polling district map
- Forecast electorate for 2030 by polling district
 - Using LGBCE methodology OR
 - Your own methodology
- Details of parish electoral arrangements
- Details of any local orders.
- All by 30 January 2024

Preliminary Period - Community Engagement

The LGBCE require us to create a Stakeholder database: (e.g.)

- Neighbourhood forums
- Hard to reach groups
- Civic societies
- Single-issue groups
- Public bodies etc

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And a Communications plan:

- Website
- Social media
- Resident magazine/bulletins
- Posters & reports
- Named communications contact

By: 30 January 2024

Minute Item 9

Review Process

The Process is divided into two main parts:

1. Councillor Numbers
2. Warding Arrangements.

Part 1: Councillor Numbers

Effective representations will address:



By When?

- Draft Submission by: *2 January 2024*
- Final Submission by: *30 January 2024*

Part 2: Warding Patterns

Effective representations will address:

Electoral
equality for
voters

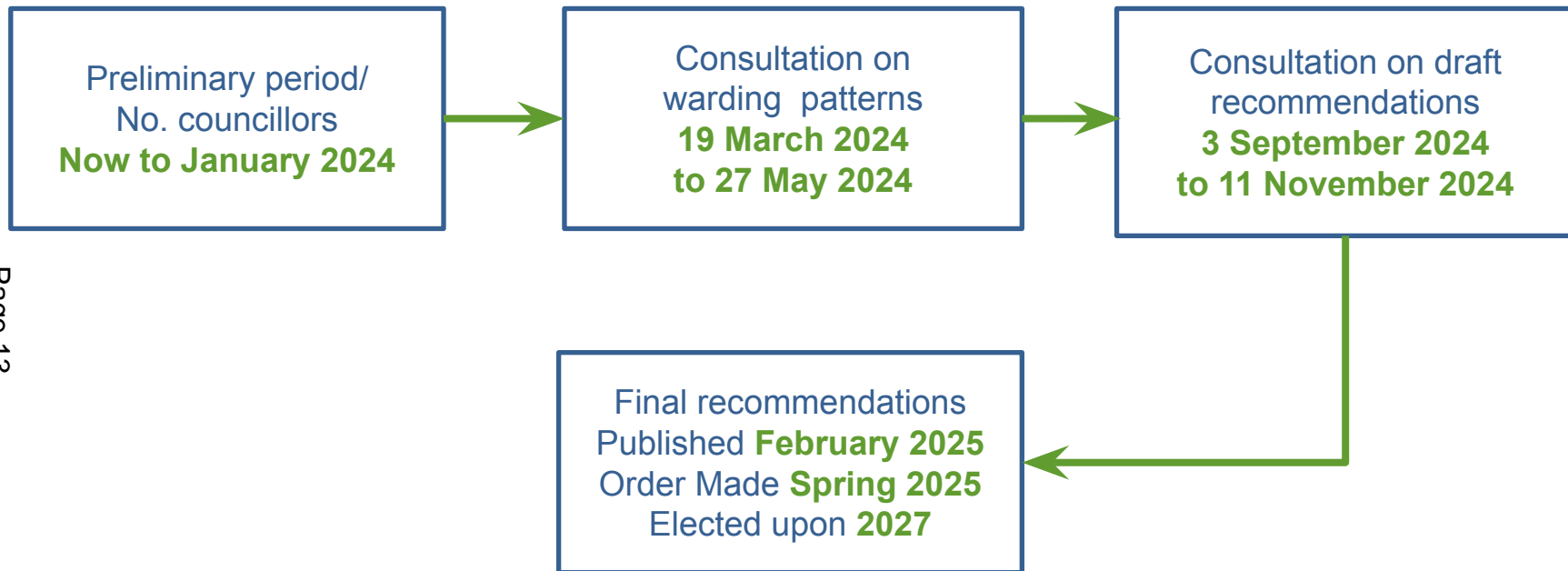
Community
identities and
interests

Effective and
convenient local
government

When?

- Consultation on warding patterns: *19 March 2024 to 27 May 2024*
- Consultation on draft recommendations: *3 September 2024 to 11 November 2024*

Timeline



Effective Representations

What the LGBCE will consider and look for in a submission:

- Rationale not assertion.
- What you DO & don't like.
- Alternatives.
- Practical community examples.
- Consideration of all 3 statutory criteria.

What the LGBCE will not consider in a submission:

- Political consequences.
- "It ain't broke don't fix it" arguments.
- Parliamentary boundaries.
- Postcodes or addresses.
- House prices & insurance.

Order making

- Final Recommendations are published
- Draft order drawn up
- Laid in Parliament for 40 days (cannot be amended)
- Order made
- New boundaries implemented at scheduled election

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