

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

27 October 2022

Subject: **Local Government Boundary Review – Consultation Response on Draft Recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Fareham Borough Council**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services**

SUMMARY

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is tasked to periodically review electoral arrangements for every council area in England. The last review in Fareham took place in 2000 and this review is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2024 local elections.

The second part of the electoral review is to consider the warding arrangements for the Borough, including a new pattern of wards and the naming of those wards. Fareham Borough Council is invited to submit its response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft recommendations, as part of the public consultation which closes on 15 November 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council reviews the working draft of the consultation response on the draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Fareham Borough Council set out in Appendix C to the report, and

- (a) considers suggesting additional wording to strengthen the narrative supporting the consultation response;
- (b) delegates authority to the Head of Democratic Services to make further alterations to the consultation response following consultation with the Executive Leader and the Member Working Group; and
- (c) agrees to the final consultation response being submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 15 November 2022.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is the independent organisation responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. This is carried out through an 'electoral review'. The Commission's view is that a 'good' review is one where the local authority actively engages with the process.
2. The final stage for the review is to set a new pattern of electoral wards for the Local Authority. The Commission has recommended that 32 councillors should be elected to the council in future. The Commission's consultation is seeking responses to its proposed pattern of wards across Fareham.

BACKGROUND

3. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives the Commission the power to review the electoral arrangements of all, or any, principal councils in England.
4. In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, the Commission seeks to:
 - Deliver electoral equality for local voters – this means ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area:
 - Reflect the interests and identities of local communities – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable: and
 - Promote effective and convenient local government – this means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, the Commission must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council.

BOUNDARY COMMISSION DRAFT PROPOSALS

5. The full details of the Commission's draft recommendations can be viewed via the Commission's website here: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/hampshire/fareham>.
6. The Commission's summary report containing details and map views for all the proposed wards is included at Appendix A with an overview map of the ward boundaries across the borough at Appendix B.
7. In its report, the Commission acknowledged that the Council's borough-wide warding pattern submission "provided for a uniform pattern of wards resulting in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority". The Commission has therefore published its recommendations which are predominantly based on the Council's proposal which was submitted in July 2022.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

8. The Boundary Review Member Working Group (Councillors Woodward, Bird, Mrs Bryant, Mrs Trott and Mrs Walker) met on 7 September 2022 to review the Commission's proposals and to discuss each of the Commission's alterations to the Councils' submission in detail.
9. In providing a general response to the Commission's proposals, the Member Working Group is keen for the point to be highlighted to the Commission that straight lines on a map do not necessarily accurately reflect actual community ties. This comment follows a number of examples where boundary lines appear to have been "smoothed out" by the Commission's proposals where the Council's submission had created a "jagged" boundary around land holdings, having carefully considered access roads for both properties and open spaces.
10. The Member Working Group agreed that the consultation submission should highlight the following areas and that further narrative is required to support the Council's original plan:
 - Warsash Road/Hunts Pond Road triangle – the postal address is Titchfield Common but the Commission proposal has it in the Meon ward.
 - Church Road has been split down the middle with properties to the north in Park Gate and properties to the south in Titchfield Common.
 - St John's Church has been included in Titchfield Common ward but it is the church for Locks Heath.
 - Catisfield Road has been included in Avenue ward but is closely associated with Titchfield village in Meon ward.
 - The boundary line cuts through The Avenue resulting in properties to the north in Avenue ward and to the south in Fort Fareham ward.
 - Deanes Park Road has been included in Fareham Town but should remain in Wallington & Downend ward.
 - The Commission's changes to Avenue, Fort Fareham and Fareham Town wards have resulted in changes to the ward electorate numbers.
11. The Licensing & Regulatory Affairs Committee considered a report at its meeting on 11 October on the draft consultation response and agreed to provide additional narrative to support the points raised above.
12. The Committee also agreed that those residents who had expressed their views on the proposed boundaries within their own community should be encouraged to respond to the Commission's consultation.
13. A working draft of the consultation response on the draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Fareham Borough Council, is set out in Appendix C to this report.
14. The Council is encouraged to review the working draft and to suggest amendments and/or additional narrative to the formal response to the Commission's consultation on

its recommendations.

15. The final completed version of the consultation response will be submitted to the Commission via its website portal by the deadline on 15 November 2022. The Head of Democratic Services will make further alterations to the submission, incorporating the Councils' input and following consultation with the Executive Leader and the Electoral Review Member Working Group.

RISK ASSESSMENT

16. The Council is required to engage in the Electoral Review process, as set out in legislation. The electoral review provides the opportunity for Members to fully engage and contribute to the consultation response submission during the review phase.

CONCLUSION

17. The Council is invited to consider the content of the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for new ward boundaries across the Borough of Fareham.

18. The Council is asked to consider recommendations (a) (b) and (c):

- (a) considers suggesting additional wording to strengthen the narrative supporting the consultation response;
- (b) delegates authority to the Head of Democratic Services to make further alterations to the consultation response following consultation with the Executive Leader and the Member Working Group; and
- (c) agrees to the final consultation response being submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 15 November 2022.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Local Government Boundary Commission report on Fareham Draft Recommendations

Appendix B - Local Government Boundary Commission Fareham Draft Recommendations Map

Appendix C – Working Draft of Consultation Response

Background Papers:

Correspondence with Review Officers at the Local Government Boundary Commission

Reference Papers:

Local Government Boundary Review - Warding Arrangements Submission – Report to Licensing & Regulatory Affairs Committee 27 June 2022

Local Government Boundary Review – Council Size Submission - Report to Licensing & Regulatory Affairs Committee 23 November 2021

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