

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

29 June 2015

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Delegated

### **1 RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

#### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Members may recall that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) are currently reviewing the electoral arrangements for Kent County Council, in a similar way to the review they conducted of TMBC a few years ago.

1.1.2 The LGBCE have now published their draft recommendations (**annex 1**) and opened a public consultation. The deadline for responses to the consultation is 6 July 2015.

#### **1.2 Recommendations of the LGBCE affecting the TMBC area**

1.2.1 The review covers the whole of the Kent County Council administrative area. Across the whole area, the number of County Councillors is proposed to reduce from 84 to 81. The draft recommendations are that there will be 65 single-member divisions (the county council equivalent of our 'wards'), and 8 two-member divisions.

1.2.2 Within the TMBC area, the draft recommendations retain the number of county councillors as 7, serving 6 single-member divisions and 1 two-member division. However, there are two proposed changes to current electoral arrangements:

- 1) The draft recommendations suggest that Ditton parish be split into two, with half being served by Malling Central division, and half by Malling North East. The report from the LGBCE states that West Malling, and East Malling & Larkfield parish councils and the current county Member for Malling Central support the division of Ditton. However, where a parish is split between two electoral divisions, there is inevitable confusion as to which county Member should be contacted by a member of the public. The division of Ditton parish, therefore, would not be helpful nor conducive to promote effective and convenient local government, one of the aims of the

review. A consequence of this, if implemented, would be that Ditton parish would be warded.

- 2) Stansted parish is to be moved from one county division to Malling West. This change makes sense, supports electoral equality, and improves effective and convenient local government.

### 1.3 Proposed response to the LGBCE consultation

- 1.3.1 In light of this, I **recommend** that Members agree the following response to the LGBCE consultation:

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Members and Officers have reviewed the draft recommendations of the LGBCE, and issue the following shared response:

1. We note there are relatively few changes within the TMBC area, and generally support this position.
2. We **support** the move of Stansted parish to Malling West electoral division.
3. We **do not support** the proposal to split Ditton parish between two county divisions. This will lead to confusion for electors who will be unsure who their county Member is, and so is not conducive to effective and convenient local government. Our view is that parishes should be moved in their entirety between county divisions where possible, or existing parish ward arrangements be used to split parishes where necessary. We **do not support** the proposal as it requires Ditton parish to become warded, which is not convenient nor effective in terms of serving the local community. The draft recommendations indicate that keeping the whole of Ditton parish within one electoral division would still result in acceptable electoral equality, and we therefore do not agree that a move is necessary or beneficial to the local community.

### 1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 This review is being conducted by the LGBCE with input from Kent County Council. Our response is met from existing budgets.

## **1.5 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.5.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **1.6 Recommendations**

1.6.1 Members are invited to **agree** the response to the LGBCE consultation, on behalf of TMBC Members and Officers as stated in paragraph 1.3.1 above.

Background papers:

contact: Richard Beesley

Nil

**Julie Beilby**

Chief Executive