

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Tuesday, 22nd November, 2016

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A C Balfour (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr D Lettington and Cllr A K Sullivan

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, R P Betts, Mrs F A Kemp, R V Roud and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O C Baldock

PART 2 - PRIVATE

ER 15/8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

ER 15/9 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group held on 19 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ER 15/10 RESPONSE TO INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

The report of the Chief Executive set out the Borough Council's proposed response to the current Boundary Commission for England (BCE) consultation on initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies. There was a legislative requirement to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600 across the UK and equalise the number of registered electors per MP across the country. The deadline for responses was 5 December 2016.

Particular reference was made to the initial proposals for the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council area, set out at paragraph 1.6 of the report. Details of the proposed new constituencies were also outlined and noted.

Careful consideration was given to the draft response to the current consultation on the initial proposals (attached as Annex 6 to the report). Members noted that each constituency must have no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507.

Concern was expressed that the initial proposals did not reflect the best interests of residents as longstanding associations between communities were severed; did not represent the communities within the Borough; made no sense and were confusing. There was strong feeling that communities that were affiliated with each other should continue to be linked and in the same Parliamentary constituency.

Members also expressed concern that representation by three different MPs could result in the needs of local residents being diluted and lost amongst the needs of the rest of the constituents. It was felt that the needs and expectations of residents in neighbouring communities differed greatly from those in Tonbridge and Malling, due in part to different economic needs of communities and local demographics.

In addition, Members believed that a constituency that was co-terminous, as far as possible, with local authority boundaries was in the best interests of electors and asked that this point be emphasised in the consultation response.

With regard to the proposed new constituencies the following points were made and noted:

Chatham and the Mallings:

- The communities of Wateringbury, Kings Hill, East Malling, West Malling and Leybourne had no affiliation with the rest of the proposed Chatham and the Mallings constituency;
- Members supported the proposal to include the entire East Malling and Larkfield parish in the same constituency as this reflected local interests and identities; and
- Members did not support the proposed name and endorsed the comment set out in the draft consultation response

Sevenoaks:

- Members believed that the wards of Borough Green and Long Mill; Downs and Mereworth and Wrotham, Ightham and Stansted had a closer affiliation with Tonbridge than with any other large community and should be included within a Tonbridge constituency.

Tonbridge and the Weald:

- The proposal did not reflect the community affiliations within the Borough of Tonbridge and Malling and grouped together communities that had no links to each other;

- Members did not support the proposed name and endorsed the comment set out in the draft consultation response; and
- Members did not support the creation of a Tonbridge and the Weald constituency.

Members noted the risk that the views of the Borough Council would not be taken into account if they could not be accommodated, or if other submissions gave counter-views. However, if the Borough Council did not respond then any views or concerns raised could not be considered by the BCE.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the key points set out above be included in the consultation response; and
- (2) in accordance with the delegated authority granted at Minute GP 16/18, the Chief Executive, in liaison with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, should finalise and submit the Borough Council's response to the BCE consultation by the deadline of 5 December 2016

**ER 15/11 POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF CAPITAL SCHEME:
ELECTORAL REGISTRATION**

Members noted the post implementation review for the capital purchase of equipment required to support the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) as set out in the report of the Chief Executive.

In addition, an estimated saving of £15,000 due to keeping all printing and processing in-house had been achieved.

A formal Post Implementation Review had been completed and was attached at Annex 2 to the report.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm