

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

13 July 2021

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1 - Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Council

#### **1 BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW – WARDING PATTERNS SUBMISSION**

This Report provides an overview of the recommendations agreed by the Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG) at its two meetings on 10 and 28 June 2021. ERWG is recommending to Council the adoption of “Option 1” as presented to the meeting held on 28 June 2021, attached at Appendix 1 for clarity.

#### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 ERWG met initially on 10 June 2021 to give consider warding pattern options that officers had produced. The aim of this exercise was to try and find areas of agreement through which some key principles could be agreed that could ultimately set some parameters for how a future warding pattern for the borough could be arrived at. The reports relating to this meeting are set out in Appendix 2.

1.1.2 Following on from this meeting, further work was undertaken by officers to produce a step-by-step approach to agreeing a warding pattern for the borough for the ERWG meeting on 28 June 2021, as set out in Appendix 3.

#### **1.2 ERWG – 28 June 2021**

1.2.1 The step-by-step approach started off by seeking to agree some ‘key principles’. These related to respecting Parish boundaries where at all possible, identifying places that should be self-contained as they each represent coherent community identities, and identifying areas that have strong links to each other and should therefore be kept together in any future warding pattern. These ‘key principles were unanimously commended by ERWG.

1.2.2 Having agreed the ‘key principles’, these were then translated into a number of ‘building blocks’, a mixture of clusters of future wards (in the case of Snodland and Tonbridge), defined wards along with pairings that would make up part of a future ward. These ‘building blocks’ were commended by ERWG.

1.2.3 Having agreed the ‘building blocks’, consideration was given to future warding pattern options for the borough. In total, 2 options (each with a variant relating to

warding patterns in the Burham, Wouldham and Aylesford area) were considered. The variant options were dismissed on the grounds of coherence and Option 1 was ultimately put forward as the warding pattern to be commended to General Purposes Committee by ERWG.

1.2.4 Following on from this discussion, consideration was given to the proposed approach to a warding pattern in Snodland. A strong preference for 2 2-Member wards was highlighted, and the proposal was unanimously commended.

1.2.5 In considering the 12-member cluster in Tonbridge, ERWG commended the 4 3-Member ward pattern.

1.2.6 In conclusion, ERWG resolved that:

- the report BE NOTED;
- the 'key principles', as set out in 1.2.2 of the ERWG report, BE COMMENDED to the General Purposes Committee for approval;
- the building blocks, as set out in 1.3.1 of the ERWG report, BE COMMENDED to the General Purposes Committee as a foundation for the Borough Council's submission to the LGBCE;
- Option 1 set out in the ERWG report BE COMMENDED to the General Purposes Committee for approval;
- the approach to a future warding pattern in Snodland, as set out in the ERWG report, BE COMMENDED to the General Purposes Committee for approval; and
- the approach to future warding patterns in Tonbridge, as referred to in 1.5.9 of the ERWG report, BE COMMENDED to the General Purposes Committee for approval.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 The LGBCE has functions under Part 3 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Under S56(1) of the 2009 Act, the LGBCE must, from time to time, conduct a review of the area of each principal council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements. In this regard, "electoral arrangements" means:

- The total number of members of the Council;
- The number and boundaries of electoral areas for purposes of the election of Councillors;
- The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral area in that area;

- The name of any electoral area
- 1.3.2 The 2009 Act does not set out how many councillors each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the LGBCE's responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority.
- 1.3.3 In making its recommendations, Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act requires the LGBCE to have regard to:
- (a) The need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council;
  - (b) The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and, in particular
    - (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
    - (ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any localities
  - (c) The need to secure effective and convenient local government.

#### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 None at this stage.

#### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 Not Applicable

#### **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.6.1 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.

#### **1.7 Recommendations**

1.5.1 That the report **BE NOTED**

1.5.2 That Option 1, as set out in Appendix 1, **BE RECOMMENDED** to Council.

Background papers:

None

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