

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 19 November 2015

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: ESCC submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on county electoral division (CED) boundaries

Purpose: To formulate and recommend a draft submission for consideration by Governance Committee and Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION

To recommend the County Council to agree the submission attached at appendix 1 in respect of the CED patterns for each of the district and borough areas of East Sussex.

1 Background

1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body whose main activity is to carry out electoral reviews of principal local authorities in England. The Commission is carrying out a review of East Sussex County Council in a coordinated process alongside simultaneous reviews of all five districts and boroughs within East Sussex. The detailed information about the review is available on the LGBCE website here:

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/east-sussex>

1.2 The first stage of this review (decision on council size) is complete. The Council's submission for stage 1 was considered at Governance Committee on 29 June 2015 and agreed at Full Council on 14 July 2015. The LGBCE has determined that East Sussex County Council shall have 50 councillors (an increase of one) which will take effect from the next county council elections in May 2017; this is in accordance with the County Council's submission. The Council's also included the following recommendations in its stage 1 submission:

- There should be a consistent picture of single-member county electoral divisions across the county (with no multi-member divisions).
- There should be coterminosity between county electoral division and district/borough ward boundaries; under no circumstances should any county electoral division straddle a district or borough boundary.

1.3 The next stage, and the subject of this report, is to make proposals on the pattern of CED boundaries for submission to the LGBCE. The LGBCE has published a guide on how to propose electoral division and ward patterns here. In summary, the main criteria are:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters – this means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of people.
- Reflecting 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.
- Promoting 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.

1.4 The LGBCE recognises that perfect electoral equality is unlikely to be achieved across the county. If the Council proposes a boundary that has many more, or fewer, voters in it than the county average of **8,651**, such a variance will need to be justified on the grounds of other statutory

criteria. The more any proposal causes councillors to represent many more, or fewer, voters than the average, the more persuasive the supporting evidence will need to be. A variance from this figure of up to 10% appears to be an acceptable threshold to the LGBCE; so the *target* number of electors per county councillor therefore lies in the range **7,786 – 9,516**.

1.5 **Appendix 1** contains the latest draft County Council submission which the Committee is asked to consider and refer to Full Council.

2 Consultation and timetable

2.1 In order to encourage participation and awareness, details of how to contribute to the electoral review process were posted on the Council's website with a link to the relevant LGBCE page, and via a press release. Organisations, groups and individuals could all submit proposals either to the Council for consideration when compiling its response or directly to the LGBCE. The Boundary Commission will shortly publish all proposals received.

2.2 The districts and boroughs have undertaken a great deal of detailed work in providing draft ward patterns. These have been considered carefully when constructing the CED pattern in order to achieve maximum coterminosity and to comply with the criteria outlined above.

2.3 All county councillors have been alerted to the boundary review and to the ways in which comments can be submitted either directly to the LGBCE or via the County Council's submission.

2.4 The LGBCE is expected to publish its draft recommendations in March 2016 which will be followed by a further period of public consultation lasting until June 2016. The LGBCE is expected to publish its final recommendations in September 2016. The new electoral arrangements will come into effect at the next scheduled elections following the completion of the review ie. May 2017 for East Sussex County Council.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Governance Committee is requested to agree the draft Council submission at appendix 1 for consideration by Full Council at its meeting on 1 December 2015.

PHILIP BAKER
Assistant Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Paul Dean
Tel. No. 01273 481751
Email: paul.dean@eastsussex.gov.uk

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 1) "How to propose a pattern of wards" (LGBCE)
- 2) Letter from the LGBCE to the ESCC Chief Executive dated 22 September 2015 that invites proposals for a new pattern of electoral divisions for East Sussex County Council and explains the process for making a submission
- 3) Electoral data for East Sussex provided by the LGBCE on which the review of electoral divisions is to be based.