

## East Sussex electoral review (stage 2)

Submission by East Sussex County Council (**DRAFT**)

### 1 BACKGROUND

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 Commission will ultimately make recommendations to Parliament on the electoral arrangements of the six local authorities in East Sussex, namely:

- 1) **Council size:** the total number of councillors elected to each authority.
- 2) The **boundaries of all wards (for district and borough councils) and divisions (for the county council)** – but not the external boundary of any of the authorities.
- 3) The **number of councillors** elected to each ward and division.
- 4) The **name of each ward and division.**

The new electoral arrangements will come into effect from the next County Council elections in May 2017; Hastings Borough Council elections in 2018 and other district and borough council elections in 2019.

#### Reason for the review

A review has been triggered because East Sussex County Council meets the Commission's intervention criteria due to electoral inequality. The Commission has found significant levels of electoral inequality between county electoral divisions. Since the last review, through development and movement of people, some county councillors now represent more, or many fewer, electors than other councillors. In addition, the Commission considers that two district/borough councils in East Sussex also meet the criteria for review. Even though only three councils have triggered a review, this review will include the county and the five districts and boroughs.

#### Council size

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.

## **2. COUNTY ELECTORAL DIVISION PATTERN**

This document contains the County Council's proposals on the pattern of CED boundaries for submission to the LGBCE. The principles that have been applied to in order to arrive at our submission are:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters – ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of people.
- Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities – establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- Promoting effective and convenient local government – ensuring that the new electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representatives and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

Effective and convenient local government is best achieved where district ward and county division boundaries are coterminous; and parish and town councils are not split between county divisions or district wards. East Sussex district and county councillors agree that split electoral areas and split parishes increase the challenges involved in creating and maintaining effective local relationships.

County councillors have highlighted strong concerns and challenges in managing in the existing two-member divisions. Particular problems have occurred in case load management in two-member divisions with casework being unfairly distributed and confusion with liaison with parish/town councils. We consider that the boundary review should seek to eliminate two-member divisions whilst retaining the same total number of county councillors.

The key elements of the profile of East Sussex relevant to this review are contained in the authority's submission in respect of Stage 1 of the process.

### **Developing this submission**

A 'Reference Group' of Members representing each of the political groups on East Sussex County Council met on 10 November 2015 to collate evidence and their experience to formulate an initial draft Council submission on CED patterns.

The draft submission was further considered by Governance Committee on 19 November 2015 and submitted to Full Council on 1 December 2015.

## **3. SUBMISSION**

The submissions with recommended CED patterns in respect of each borough and district of East Sussex are as follows: