



## Democratic Renewal Working Party 24 November 2011

### Electoral Reviews

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A proposal has been received from Councillor Nettleton regarding conducting a partial review of ward boundaries in Bury St Edmunds during 2012 before the County Council elections in 2013. He goes on to provide details of projected electorate numbers in these wards and proposals as to how the new boundaries may look.
- 1.2 This paper provides information for the Working Party detailing the process of Electoral Reviews. Officers make no recommendations.

#### 2. Process for Undertaking Electoral Reviews

- 2.1 Any reviews of ward boundaries are the responsibility of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The Commission conduct either periodic electoral reviews (PERs) which are conducted "from time to time" in every principal local authority, or further electoral reviews (FERs) which can be conducted at any time for a particular area if it appears to the Commission to be desirable.
- 2.2 One of the reasons for conducting a FER would be to correct an electoral imbalance. In these circumstances the criteria used by the Commission to initiate such a review are as follows:-
  - (a) more than 30% of a council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for the authority;
  - (b) one or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
  - (c) the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
- 2.3 The table at Appendix A shows the electorate totals for all Borough wards and compares the ratio of electors to councillor across all wards. None of our wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30% although 5 wards do have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for the authority (this equates to 16% of the Council's wards). These wards are Barningham, Cavendish, Kedington, Pakenham and Withersfield. None of the wards within Bury St Edmunds show an electoral imbalance.

- 2.4 A council may request that a review be conducted if it feels that changes to ward boundaries are necessary because they are no longer clear and distinct or reflect community identities and local ties. The Commission are allowed to respond to such a request by conducting a review although they do not have to do so.
- 2.5 Where a review is carried out, the Commission has confirmed this would cover the whole of the Council's wards and they would seek to make electoral change orders six months in advance of the election in which the changes to electoral arrangements are implemented. They would start a review with no pre-determined view of its outcome. The next scheduled elections are in May 2015, therefore, any review would need to be concluded by December 2014.
- 2.6 For information, a review is likely to take up to 12 months to complete with the following indicative timescale being:

Week 1	Start of Review.
Weeks 1-12	Initial consultation and information gathering phase.
Week 22	LGBCE produce draft recommendations.
Weeks 22-30	Further consultation period.
Week 40+	Final recommendations.

- 2.7 The Commission aims to recommend a pattern of wards that achieves good electoral equality, reflects community identities and interests and provides for effective and convenient local government. They will also seek to use strong, easily-identifiable boundaries. To enable them to achieve this they need to have a good understanding of community identity. Such information that may enhance this understanding is as follows:-

- (a) economic/demographic data and mapping;
- (b) community village usage mapping;
- (c) local place surveys; and
- (d) partner/stakeholder details.

- 2.8 The Commission are currently undertaking electoral reviews in ten local authorities across the country, although there are likely to be many more that have submitted requests. The Commission has also explained that a number of local authorities withdraw their initial request once they realise the considerable work involved in conducting a review.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Working Party is asked to consider the above information.

For further information, please contact:-

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## Ratios of electors to councillors for Borough Wards

Ward	Electorate	No of members	Ratio of electors to councillor	Difference from average ratio
Abbeygate	3,842	2	1,921	3.22%
Bardwell	2,026	1	2,026	8.86%
Barningham	2,128	1	2,128	14.34%
Barrow	1,845	1	1,845	-0.87%
Cavendish	1,665	1	1,665	-10.54%
Chedburgh	1,740	1	1,740	-6.51%
Clare	1,704	1	1,704	-8.44%
Eastgate	1,910	1	1,910	2.63%
Fornham	1,778	1	1,778	-4.47%
Great Barton	1,788	1	1,788	-3.93%
Haverhill East	5,602	3	1,867	0.33%
Haverhill North	5,824	3	1,941	4.31%
Haverhill South	3,934	2	1,967	5.69%
Haverhill West	4,087	2	2,044	9.80%
Horringer & Whelnetham	1,755	1	1,755	-5.70%
Hundon	1,758	1	1,758	-5.54%
Ixworth	1,843	1	1,843	-0.97%
Kedington	1,623	1	1,623	-12.79%
Minden	3,608	2	1,804	-3.07%
Moreton Hall	5,747	3	1,916	2.93%
Northgate	1,863	1	1,863	0.10%
Pakenham	2,184	1	2,184	17.35%
Risby	1,993	1	1,993	7.09%
Risbygate	3,763	2	1,882	1.10%
Rougham	1,849	1	1,849	-0.65%
Southgate	3,551	2	1,776	-4.60%
St Olaves	3,426	2	1,713	-7.96%
Stanton	2,020	1	2,020	8.54%
Westgate	3,438	2	1,719	-7.64%
Wickhambrook	1,799	1	1,799	-3.34%
Withersfield	1,657	1	1,657	-10.97%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83,750</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1,861</b>	