

# Chichester District Council

CABINET and COUNCIL

31 March 2016

## Chichester Electoral Review: Creating a Pattern of Wards

### 1. Contacts

**Report Author:**

Philip Coleman, Member Services Manager,  
Tel: 01243 534655      E-mail: [pcoleman@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:pcoleman@chichester.gov.uk)

**Cabinet Member:**

Tony Dignum, Leader of the Council,  
Tel: 01243 538585      E-mail: [tdignum@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:tdignum@chichester.gov.uk)

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Council adopts the recommendations of the Boundary Review Panel and approves the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England of the proposals in Appendix 3 as their preferred pattern of wards for a 36 member Council.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1. At its meeting on 10 March 2016, the Council approved submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of a proposal for a reduction in the number of councillors to approximately 35 or 36, to be implemented for the district council elections in 2019.
- 3.2. On 26 January 2016 the LGBCE announced that it was minded to recommend that 36 councillors should be elected to Chichester District Council in future and invited proposals on a pattern of wards to accommodate those councillors to be submitted by 4 April 2016.
- 3.3. A series of three member workshops drew up some initial proposals for different geographical areas of the District. Having taken into account the output from the workshops, the Boundary Review Panel agreed a consultation document setting out a proposed pattern of wards. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.4. On 18 February, the consultation document was sent to all members, all parish councils and chairmen of parish meetings, West Sussex County Council, South Downs National Park Authority, the local Police commander and political parties in the Chichester and Arundel and South Downs constituencies. The consultation document was also put on the Council's website and a press release was issued. Comments were invited by 14 March.

- 3.5. The Boundary Review Panel met again on 21 March to consider the responses to the consultation document. This report sets out the Panel's recommendations.

#### 4. Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1. The outcome is that the Council should propose to the LGBCE by the end of their consultation on 4 April a pattern of wards which meets the Commission's three statutory criteria: electoral equality; community interests and identities; and effective and convenient local government.
- 4.2. **Electoral Equality:** This means that each councillor should represent roughly the same number of voters. The projected number of voters in the District is 98,781. (This is based on projections to 2021, as required by the LGBCE to help future-proof the new arrangements) This means that, on average, each councillor should represent about **2,744** voters. Of course, this is cannot be achieved perfectly, but the further the number of voters in a proposed ward departs from the average (especially if it is by more than  $\pm 10\%$ ), the more persuasive the justification required on the other criteria.
- 4.3. **Interests and identities of local communities:** This means respecting local ties and setting easily identifiable boundaries. The patterns of community life, represented by transport links, community groups, facilities such as shops, health services and community halls, and shared interests should be taken into account. In many cases parishes can be used as building blocks.
- 4.4. **Effective and convenient local government:** This means ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected councillor(s) – that wards are neither too big nor too small in extent and all parts of the wards are linked together. Wards may have more than one councillor, but not more than three.

#### 5. Responses to consultation

- 5.1. The responses to the consultation document are set out in Appendix 2, together with comments upon them. Responses received by Monday morning 21 March were taken into account by the Boundary Review Panel. Some responses have been received subsequently and the Appendix lists those received up until Wednesday morning 23 March. Responses received subsequently will be reported at the Cabinet meeting.
- 5.2. Some of the responses are not directed to the pattern of wards proposed in the consultation document but raise other issues, such as the reduction in size of the Council. This applies, particularly to the responses received from Mr Jonathan Brown, 'Make Votes Count In West Sussex', Chichester Liberal Democrats and Mrs Sarah Sharp.

#### 6. Issues and Proposals

- 6.1. **Chichester City.** With a projected electorate of 23,276 voters, Chichester City would need 8.5 members to produce warding arrangements of average size. Having considered the scope for transferring areas of the city to outlying wards or for bringing adjoining settlements into district wards for the city, the consultation document concluded that Chichester City should be dealt with as a

separate unit and that district ward boundaries should not cross the city boundary. Given the pattern proposed in the rest of the district, it needs nine councillors to achieve an overall number of 36 councillors for the whole district. This choice is supported by the fact that the Local Plan identifies Chichester City North as the focus for substantial new development, which will not all be complete by 2021, and a strategic development location at Chichester West, which will be started by 2021 but continue to develop after that date. Both these areas lie wholly within the city. The consultation document, therefore, proposed a pattern of wards to provide for nine district councillors in Chichester city.

- 6.2.** The consultation responses support keeping Chichester City as a single entity, with no district wards crossing the city boundary. There is also support, and no counter-proposals, for the proposed division into five wards, with a single-member central ward and four two-member wards named after compass points. Co-terminosity with proposals for county electoral divisions has been sought where possible, but these have not been settled yet, with WSCC putting forward counter-proposals to the LGBCE's draft recommendations. It is to be hoped that the LGBCE will seek co-terminosity as far as possible in producing final recommendations for WSCC and draft recommendations for Chichester District Council. This will not always be possible and there are divergences in places, notably East Broyle and Arundel Park.
- 6.3.** Given the proposal for nine district councillors in the city, it is inevitable that the average size of ward will be below the district average. The proposed Chichester West ward exceeded the 10% tolerance below the average, justified by giving headroom for continued development of the West of Chichester Strategic Development Location. The Panel suggests that this is addressed by additionally transferring Woodlands Lane (adjacent to East Broyle) with 122 electors from Chichester North to Chichester West. This reduces the variance to -8.69%.
- 6.4. Selsey and Sidlesham.** There has been strong objection to combining Sidlesham parish with Selsey town. These objections are set out in Appendix 2 and appear to be well-founded. As a result, a workshop session of councillors from the Manhood area was held at Selsey, which proposed an alternative pattern of wards based on a 35 member council, described in the comments column in Appendix 2. This had the advantage of making positive variances in other areas more acceptable. However, it made negative variances worse, and pushes the Chichester Central, East and West Wards over the -10% tolerance. It also required the transfer of Shopwyke (including Shopwyke Lakes) to Tangmere Ward, thus splitting Oving parish. This means that the headroom for electorate growth arising from new development in Tangmere Ward would quickly be exhausted, as it would contain two strategic development locations.
- 6.5.** The Panel advises the Council to comply with the LGBCE's request for a pattern of wards for a 36 member Council, and does not support the proposal for a 35 member council. It did consider whether an alternative pattern could be devised for a 36 member council, but linking Sidlesham with other parishes, such as Donnington. However, none of these alternatives seemed to the Panel to be more advantageous than the original proposal, which the Panel, therefore, supports. This will involve devising a pattern of wards whereby most of Selsey

forms a three-member ward, and Sidlesham and part of Selsey form a single-member ward.

- 6.6. The Witterings.** The consultation sought views on whether The Witterings should be one three-member ward, three single-member wards, or one two-member and one single-member ward. There were mixed views in response. The proposal for one three-member ward avoids dividing West Wittering parish between wards, and seems to reflect the unity of interest of the western Manhood Peninsula. This is the option supported by the Panel.
- 6.7. Bosham Ward.** This proposed ward is over the +10% tolerance – in fact at +15.23% the largest proposed ward in the district. This reflects the fact that it comprises three large parishes (Chidham & Hambrook, Bosham and Fishbourne) which are separated from other parts of the south of the district by creeks of Chichester Harbour. The only practical way to deal with the excess variance is to ward Fishbourne parish and move some electors into Donnington ward. However, there is little headroom in Donnington for this. On the basis that every little helps, perhaps Apuldram Lane (about 60 electors) could be moved into Donnington ward. This would decrease the variance on Bosham ward to 14.14%, and increase that in Donnington to 9.77%. The small gains in electoral equality do not seem to justify the complication of splitting Fishbourne parish.
- 6.8. Harting Ward.** Despite its size, this Ward is supported from those of its constituent parish councils that have responded. There has been no dissent.
- 6.9. Fernhurst and Lynchmere Wards.** There is support from local members and constituent parish councils for these to be combined as a two member ward. This seems well-founded, especially in view of the way the parish boundary cuts across Vann Road and the communities along it. The dissenting voice is Lurgashall Parish Council, which does not want to be part of it, but would prefer to be united with Northchapel and other parishes to its east or south. There does not seem to be an acceptable solution that enables this. See Appendix 2, comments in relation to Lurgashall Parish Council's and Cllr Caroline Neville's responses. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the Fernhurst and Lynchmere (locally preferred spelling) wards, as proposed, should be combined as a two-member ward.
- 6.10. Midhurst and surrounding parishes.** Midhurst on its own is too large to be a single member ward and too small to be a two member ward. The original proposals unite it with a number of parishes to the west and south in a two-member ward. There has been a suggestion that Midhurst should be divided into two roughly equal sized wards (North and South) each of which should be joined with neighbouring parishes to form two single-member wards. The local members and the Town Council do not support this. The Panel recommends one two-member ward, as in the original consultation document, except that Woolbeding and Redford Parish has expressed a preference to be grouped with Stedham with Iping, Bepton and Midhurst, rather than Easebourne. This can be accommodated without electoral imbalance.
- 6.11. North East Parishes.** There is a comment that ward boundaries should not cross the Parliamentary Constituency boundary. However, the Panel does not believe this is a relevant criterion, especially as a further review of such

boundaries is likely to take place soon. It is also incompatible with a request from the parishes of Kirdford and Plaistow & Ifield to be in a two member ward with Loxwood and Wisborough Green, in recognition of formal joint working arrangements that take place between them. This really only works if Northchapel and Ebernoe stay included. The Panel recommends one two-member ward for the Wisborough Green and Plaistow Wards as proposed.

6.12. **Names of wards.** In general, the consultation document adopted the previous practice of naming wards after the largest settlements within them. The consultation document did offer alternatives in two wards, and one suggestion has arisen in relation to a third:-

(a) **Westbourne Ward or Ems Valley Ward?** WSCC prefers Westbourne. No response has yet been received from the local member or any of the affected parish councils. The Panel suggests the ward should be named Westbourne

(b) **Lavant Valley or Westhampnett Ward.** WSCC suggested a further option, Goodwood. The Panel supports this suggestion as being preferable to the alternatives. Westhampnett village lies in one corner of the ward. Boxgrove and Eartham are parishes within the ward which lie outside the Lavant Valley, and Lavant parish itself is in a different ward to which it gives its name.

(c) **Harting or Western Weald.** The local member for Harting suggests Western Weald as an alternative name. The Panel does not support this, as being vague and not sufficiently descriptive of the place.

## 7. Alternatives that have been considered

7.1. The alternative options have been described above and are considered in more detail in the Comments column in Appendix 2

## 8. Resource and legal implications

8.1. There are no direct resource and legal implications arising from this stage of the review. The main costs are the time of members and officers in preparing and consulting on proposals for the LGBCE. These costs are being met within existing budgets. The project is managed by the Member Services Manager under the direction of the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance and Governance Services.

## 9. Community impact and corporate risks

9.1. The impact of a reduction in Council size is that ward sizes will increase and include larger populations and, in rural areas, more parishes. Some reviews have divided councils, usually on party political lines, with the result that there is a submission from a minority political party alongside the Council's official submission, but there has been little evidence of party political implications being brought to bear on this review. The LGBCE recognises that its recommendations may have local political implications, but that is not a factor it takes into account.

- 9.2. When ward boundaries are considered, there is the potential for controversy and objections. It can be very difficult to reconcile incompatibilities between the statutory criteria of electoral equality, community interests and identities, and effective and convenient local government. This is already apparent in such cases as Selsey and Sidlesham and Lurgashall, Northchapel and Lodsworth.
- 9.3. The LGBCE tries to use parishes as building blocks for district wards. It can neither create nor abolish a parish council, nor change its boundaries. However, it may create or change the boundaries of parish wards. The recommended proposals also seek to use parishes as building blocks, and only in the two largest settlements, Chichester City and Selsey (where it is already the case), are there proposals to divide parishes between wards.
- 9.4. The LGBCE will consider the Council's proposals and any other representations it receives by 4 April, some of which may not yet be known to the Council. It will put forward its own recommendations for consultation between 7 June and 2 August 2016. There is certainly the possibility that these may differ from the Council's preferred solution.

## 10. Other Implications

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	None
<b>Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:</b>	None
<b>Safeguarding:</b>	None
<b>Health Impact</b>	None

## 11. Appendices

- 11.1. Appendix 1 – Original Consultation Document  
 Appendix 2 – Responses to Consultation  
 Appendix 3 – Recommended proposal

## 12. Background Papers

- 12.1. Report to Boundary Review Panel meeting on 21 March 2016.