

## ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking an electoral review of Hampshire County Council's division boundaries. This Committee has considered, firstly, on 13 July 2015, its initial views on the review and, secondly, on 8 January 2016, recommendations in response to the LGBCE's draft recommendations. The Council has delegated power to the Committee to comment on the Council's behalf.
- 1.2 The LGBCE's final proposals were due to be published on 5 April 2016. However, the LGBCE has, unusually, opened a new phase of public consultation in regard to the county division boundaries for Havant and the New Forest. The Commission has indicated that it has listened to views put to it during the consultation and now proposes to make substantial changes to its previous recommendations for Havant and for the New Forest. (The Commission is satisfied that it has received sufficient evidence to finalise its proposals for the rest of Hampshire and is not consulting on recommendations for any other areas.) They have said that persuasive evidence was received to justify changes in seven New Forest and three Havant Divisions. This report deals with the proposals for the New Forest only.
- 1.3 The revised Divisions for New Forest District now proposed by the LGBCE are set out in the map at Appendix 1. The proposed revised composition of the Divisions is set out in Appendix 2.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee is reminded that, by law, the LGBCE must follow the following three statutory criteria (summarised) when undertaking electoral reviews:
- Electoral equality (that is, the number of electors represented by each Councillor must, as nearly as is possible, be the same)
  - Community interests/identities with readily identifiable boundaries
  - Effective and convenient local government
- 2.2 The LGBCE's initial recommendations, together with Hampshire County Council's and New Forest District Council's proposals, are appended as follows:

***LGBCE's initial recommendations:***

Map – Appendix 3

Composition of Divisions – Appendix 4

***Hampshire County Council's proposals:***

Map – Appendix 5

Composition of Divisions – Appendix 6

***New Forest District Council's proposals***

Map – Appendix 7

Composition of Divisions – Appendix 8

- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 9 is the letter dated 10 May 2016 addressed to the Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council by the LGBCE. The Committee is asked to note the last sentence on page 1 – “In the event that we do not receive sufficient evidence for all of the potential changes set out in the attached maps, the Commission is likely to revert to its draft recommendations and confirm these as final”.
- 2.4 The Committee will be aware that, in its initial proposals for New Forest District, the LGBCE recommended that the number of Councillors representing the District be reduced from 11 to 10. The District Council made strong representations for the number to be reinstated to 11, bearing in mind the very large divisions that will be created in New Forest District if the number of members is reduced, but the LGBCE appears to have dismissed this request in presenting revised recommendations based on 10 County Councillors for the District.
- 2.5 In its recommendations, the District Council put forward suggestions for the Copythorne, Netley Marsh and Bransgore Parishes to be contained within single Divisions, rather than being split over more than one Division as initially proposed by the LGBCE. The District Council also put forward:
- a proposal for avoiding the division of the Bashley ward of New Milton Town Council (suggested by Hampshire County Council);
  - revised proposals for the make-up of the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge, Ringwood and Brockenhurst Divisions, as set out in Appendices 7 and 8;
  - support for HCC’s proposal that Exbury & Lepe Parish fall within the South Waterside, and not the Brockenhurst, Division.

### **3. REVISED LGBCE PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The LGBCE’s revised proposals include maintaining the Copythorne, Netley Marsh and Bransgore Parishes within single County Divisions. This is welcomed. The LGBCE’s proposals do, however, differ from the District Council’s recommendations in the following respects:
- Hyde Parish has been included in the Ringwood Division (the District Council’s proposal was for Hyde to be in the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge Division);
  - Burley Parish has been included in the Brockenhurst Division, whereas the District Council suggested that it form part of the Ringwood Division;
  - The division of the Bashley Ward of New Milton Town Council across two County Divisions – the NF polling district in Brockenhurst Division and the NG polling district in the Milford & Hordle Division. This will mean that a new ward of New Milton Town Council will have to be created;
  - Exbury & Lepe Parish has been retained in the Brockenhurst Division, and not included in the South Waterside Division.

### **4. COMMENTS ON REVISED LGBCE PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 In the officers’ view, the LGBCE’s revised proposals are an improvement on those put forward initially. The Copythorne, Netley Marsh and Bransgore Parishes are now within single electoral divisions and therefore maintain community identity, while avoiding potential for confusion as to which County Councillor represents which part of a Parish.

- 4.2 Unfortunately the revised proposals provide for the Bashley ward of New Milton Town Council to be divided across two County Divisions, a situation which is not ideal and which will mean having to create a separate ward of New Milton Town Council. (At present there are coterminous Bashley wards for both the District and the Town Councils, with the District ward being represented by one District Councillor and the Town ward by two Town Councillors.) Changes would not be necessary to the District ward but a separate Town Council ward would have to be established. It is understood that this would take effect from the next ordinary election of Town Councillors, which would be in 2019.
- 4.3 It is not a simple matter to include all of Bashley ward in either the Brockenhurst or the Milford & Hordle Divisions because of the electoral equality consideration. Placing the whole of Bashley within the Brockenhurst Division would increase the electorate in that Division to 16,212, 17% above the County average. Putting the whole of Bashley in the Milford & Hordle Division would mean the electorate in that Division rising to 16,045, or 15.8% above the County average. Neither would be acceptable to the LGBCE.
- 4.4 Without putting forward more comprehensive proposals for change to the LGBCE (for example continuing to promote the make-up of the Divisions proposed by the District Council in January 2016 and as set out in Appendices 7 and 8), it is difficult to address the division of Bashley. Members are asked to consider the issue in the light of the current circumstances.

## 5. DIVISION NAMES

- 5.1 At the initial recommendations stage, the LGBCE invited suggestions for names for the new Divisions. This Council suggested the following:

### **LGBCE Proposal**

Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge  
 Brockenhurst  
 Ringwood  
 Milford & Hordle

### **NFDC Suggested Alternative**

North Forest  
 Mid-Forest  
 West Forest  
 Milford, Hordle & Fernhill

- 5.2 However, the current LGBCE's proposal for the Milford & Hordle Division includes part of Bashley as well as Fernhill. The Committee is requested to indicate whether it wishes to pursue the renaming of the Divisions as originally proposed and, if so, whether it wishes to make an alternative suggestion regarding a name for the Milford & Hordle Division.

## 6. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S VIEWS

- 6.1 At the time of writing this report, Hampshire County Council's views on the LGBCE's revised recommendations are not known. In view of the short period to respond to the LGBCE, the County Council has delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the political group leaders, to respond on the County Council's behalf. HCC's views should be known by the Committee's meeting on 6 June and will be reported orally.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The fact that the LGBCE has published revised recommendations that avoid dividing the Bransgore, Copythorne and Netley Marsh Parishes over more than one Division is welcomed. It is, however, disappointing that it is now proposed that the Bashley ward of New Milton Town Council be split over two county divisions, which will necessitate the creation of a separate ward of New Milton Town Council. This will mean that the co-terminosity of the District and Parish Wards will be lost. This will not accord with two of the three statutory criteria on which the LGBCE is required to operate - community interests/identities with readily identifiable boundaries; and effective and convenient local government. However, this is not easy to address without recommending more significant changes to the LGBCE's revised recommendations.

## **8. FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Enlarging the County Divisions and dividing parishes across different divisions will mean more and longer journeys by County Councillors to attend Parish Council meetings or to attend to other local issues in their Divisions, with resulting increased travel distances and higher travel claims by County Councillors.

## **9. CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are none.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The Committee is requested to consider the LGBCE's revised recommendations for the composition of the County Divisions within New Forest District, and to agree the Council's response.

### **Further information:**

**Rosemary Rutins**  
**Service Manager, Democratic Services &**  
**Member Support**  
**Tel: (023) 8028 5588**  
**e-mail: [rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk)**

### **Background Papers:**

**Published documents**