

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Summary

Who we are:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas.

Electoral reviews:

The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards – for a local authority.

Why Tonbridge & Malling?

We are conducting an electoral review of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to deliver improved levels of electoral equality for local voters.

Tonbridge & Malling currently has high levels of electoral inequality so that the value of your vote - in borough council elections - varies depending on where you live in the Tonbridge & Malling.

Council size

The Commission is minded to recommend that Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council should be represented by 53 borough councillors in future: the same as under the current arrangements.

We consider that a council size of 53 members will ensure the council can discharge its roles and responsibilities effectively and will provide for a pattern of wards that reflects community identities across Tonbridge & Malling.

You can read the full report and view the maps on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk We will also make them available in council buildings and libraries.

Electoral arrangements

Our draft recommendations propose that Tonbridge & Malling's 53 councillors should represent six three-member wards, 17 two-member wards and one single-member ward across the borough.

The Commission believes its draft recommendations meet its obligations - which are set out in law - to:

- Deliver electoral equality for voters.
- Reflect local community interests and identities.
- Promote effective and convenient local government.

The Commission welcomes proposals for alternative boundaries that better reflect the three criteria above.

Stage starts	Description
17 January 2012	Submission of proposals for ward patterns to the Commission by Borough Council
2 February 2012	Commission's formulation of draft recommendations
17 April 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
25 June 2012	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

Prior to the publication of these draft recommendations, the Commission received a submission from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council which proposed new ward boundaries for the whole borough.

The submission can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

We are now opening up the consultation to any local people or groups who wish to have their say.

General analysis

The Commission's draft recommendations for new ward boundaries are broadly based on the proposals presented to us by the Borough Council with some changes.

Tonbridge

Our proposals for Tonbridge recommend that there should be six two-member wards: Cage Green, Castle, Higham, Judd, Trench and Vauxhall wards. The scheme also proposes a three-member Medway ward.

The recommendations are broadly based on the proposals put to us by the council which maintained a similar warding pattern to the current electoral arrangements.

We have made some changes to the council's proposals which we believe better reflect the criteria we must use when composing recommendations. For example, we are proposing that the area around Portman Park should be part of Medway ward.

We also propose to transfer a small area to the west of Tonbridge High Street (the Danvers Road and Avebury Avenue areas) into Judd ward.

Central Tonbridge & Malling

Our proposals for this part of the borough recommend that there should be a single-member Downs ward as well as three two-member wards: Hildenborough, Mereworth & Wateringbury and Wrotham, Igtham & Stansted wards. The scheme also proposes two three-member wards: Borough Green & Long Mill and Hadlow & East Peckham wards.

We are proposing some changes to the council's scheme in this area such as including a two-member Mereworth & Wateringbury ward which would provide better electoral equality compared to the council's proposals.

North East Tonbridge & Malling

Our draft recommendations for north eastern Tonbridge & Malling would create two-member wards of: Aylesford North & Walderslade; Aylesford South; Burham, Eccles & Wouldham; Ditton; East Malling; Larkfield North; Larkfield South; and Snodland East & Ham Hill, and three-member wards of: Kings Hill; West Malling & Leybourne and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes.

We are proposing a number of modifications to the scheme put to us for this area by the council. For example, we believe that the community of Eccles shared interests and identity with the neighbouring area of Burham, so have placed the two areas in the same ward.

We are also proposing modifications to the council's proposals for a Ditton ward. For example, we do not believe that the development that straddles the boundary of Ditton Parish and

East Malling & Larkfield should be split between two wards. In addition, we are proposing that Robson Drive should be included in Ditton ward as there is no road access to it through Aylesford South ward.

We are also proposing further amendments to the council's scheme to ensure improved levels of electoral equality and to reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

What happens next?

There will now be a ten-week consultation period on the draft recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by **25 June 2012**.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling and welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and number of councillors representing those wards.

Please remember that if you are submitting an alternative pattern of wards to us, you should consider whether your proposal satisfies the three criteria the Commission must use and which are listed on the first page of this summary.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Officer (Tonbridge & Malling)
LGBCE
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Or email:
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report and accompanying maps are available to view at:
www.lgbce.org.uk

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010. It is independent of government and political parties, and is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England