

Swale Borough Council

Warding arrangements for Elections

2015

Proposals from the Labour Party

Including

The Labour Group on Swale Borough Council

The Sittingbourne Branch Labour Party

The Faversham Branch Labour Party

The Sheerness Branch Labour Party

Introduction

In making this proposal, the Labour Party has taken account of the three statutory criteria for warding arrangements,

1. Equality of representation. We believe all of our recommendations fall within a 10% +/- variance from the mean of 2157 electors per elected member
2. Community identities and interests. In general, we have felt that many of the previous boundary arrangements did reflect good community interests. With that in mind and also intending to provide as much continuity as possible we have tried to retain many of the previous warding arrangements. However, the need to re-draw boundaries to meet equality of representation has also presented opportunities to propose new wards with, in our view, better community identities than existed in the past. This applies particularly in parts of Sittingbourne and at the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey.
3. Providing for convenient and effective local government. We are strongly in favour of 2 member wards being the general norm and we argue that effective decision making by lead members of the Council is one of the good reasons to normalise 2 member wards. There is no guarantee that a 2 member ward team will work perfectly, but there is an ideal in which one member might be given space to play a lead role in local government if teamed along with a member willing to devote a greater amount of time to ward and community work. Hopefully too, there will be instances in which a member who is in full time employment can work with one who is not, and overall a team of two can often provide a balance of skills, resources and time for the community they represent. A two member ward is likely to provide continuity for local people if one member is affected by ill health or other time pressures. We are proposing 22 wards with 2 members, and 3 wards where we find it difficult to avoid there being only one member.

It follows therefore, that we are opposed to 3 member wards of the kind rather anomalously agreed for the Isle of Sheppey, in the previous warding arrangement. We believe the current 3 member wards are too large to allow members to develop good intimate community relationships with their wards and they generally fail to reflect a true community interest and identity. It is hard to describe the local community of interest that stretches in the Queenborough and Halfway ward, from the Rushenden estate to Halfway Corner. Similarly, we believe that Eastchurch is not at ease in the current Sheppey Central

ward. We have to say, also, that a three member ward might possibly allow coasting by elected members, though we do not offer any examples of this.

Structure of our submission

We have divided the Borough into 3 areas

1. The Sittingbourne area, which is made up of the mainland from Upchurch in the west to Teynham in the east. Here we are proposing 23 seats, made up of 11x2 member wards, and 1 one member ward
2. The Faversham area, where we propose 10 seats overall with 7 seats for Faversham town and 3 seats for the rural hinterland. This results in 4x2 member wards and 2 one member wards, one in the town and one in the rural area.
3. The Isle of Sheppey, where we are proposing 14 members, representing 7x2 members

Sittingbourne Area

We are proposing the following wards for the Sittingbourne area.

Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Chalkwell and the Meads; Hartlip Newington and Upchurch; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; Rural Sittingbourne; Sittingbourne South and Teynham and Lynsted. They are all 2 member wards, with the exception of Rural Sittingbourne which would have one member

Whilst we have looked for continuity in many instances, we believe the proposed configuration achieves improved community identification, for example by reforming wards such as Grove, Chalkwell and St Michaels, and producing more representative wards such as Homewood and Borden and Grove. Sittingbourne emerges with only one single member ward, and we believe that is beneficial to areas, such as Iwade and Borden.

Faversham Town and associated rural areas

We are proposing the following wards for the Faversham area.

Abbey, Boughton and Courtney, Davington Priory, East Downs, St Ann's and Watling. Davington priory and East Downs are 1 member wards, but the rest are all 2 member wards.

In the Faversham town area the main 'community' is the town itself. Some of the estates and areas within wards can be considered as communities in terms of geography and local shops but none of our proposals suggest splitting any of these.

The primary justification of the suggested moves is to more closely meet the average number of electors per councillor. Abbey is the ward that is projected to be most over variance so we are suggesting moving three areas out of this ward.

The areas that we are proposing to move are ones where the electorate is very unlikely to change over the periods being considered. The electorate quoted for these areas is based on the 2010-11 register.

These areas are:

The Love Lane Estate, which is a self-contained estate bounded by the two railway lines to the East of Faversham and love Lane with little room for more development.

The area west of Preston Street and south of the central car park comprised mainly of small terraced properties with no room for development.

West Street is part of the town centre shopping area with flats over shops.

The new boundaries marked on the enclosed map are indicative. The lists of streets moved should be used to determine the actual new boundaries.

Sheppey

We are proposing the following 7x2 member wards for the Isle of Sheppey-

Queenborough; Sheerness West; Sheerness East; Minster Cliffs; Minster East; Minster West; and Eastern

We believe this review offers Swale an opportunity to provide Sheppey with a much improved system of representation on this Council. Sheppey has 4 distinct communities; Sheerness, Queenborough, Minster and the East of the Island. We have endeavoured to recognise this by proposing one ward for Queenborough, two for Sheerness, three for Minster, and one for the Eastern parishes. Equality of representation does force us to include part of Halfway in Queenborough and another parting Sheerness East, but we see most of Halfway as being identified with the large and growing central part of the Island around Minster. To achieve equality in the Eastern Ward, it is necessary to incorporate the eastern end of Minster Cliffs, but in truth there are many links between people living there and the parish of Eastchurch.

Otherwise, we believe the proposals we make for Sheppey are capable of producing a much more identifiable community link between members and their electorates than has previously been the case.

Overall for the whole of Swale, we believe our proposals are faithful to the criteria demanded of the review. In making such proposals as the break up of Chalkwell Ward in Sittingbourne, we believe we have demonstrated that the interests of good local representation have guided our planning, rather than any partisan calculation.

This document has been prepared by

Cllr Roger Truelove	Leader of the Labour Group on Swale Borough Council
Cllr Angela Harrison	Whip to the Labour Group
Cllr Trevor Payne	Faversham Branch Labour Party and member of Faversham Town Council
Ms Judith Webb	Faversham Branch Labour Party
Mrs Margaret Cooper	Sittingbourne Branch Labour Party
Mr Matthew Wheatcroft	Sheerness Branch Labour Party

9th January 2012.

PROPOSALS

Ward Name	Number of Councillors	Forecast Electorate in 2017	Forecast Electoral Variance in 2017	Evidence and Rationale for the proposed Ward
Abbey	2	4268	-1%	<p>Abbey is currently predicted to be 11% over variance.</p> <p>Move Love Lane estate (Ambleside, Buttermere, Ennerdale, Les Spickett Close, Love Lane, and Windermere) from Abbey East to Watling East. The area was in Watling ward prior to the last change for the elections in 2002 and used the Preston School room as a polling station. This polling station has recently been brought back into service for Watling East.</p> <p>Move the area west of Preston Street (but not Preston Street itself) and south of the central car park (Bank Street, Cross Lane, Dorset Place, Forbes Road, Stone Street, Union</p>

				<p>Street, Victoria Place) from Abbey West to St Ann's East. This would bring all of Stone Street and roads off of it into one ward (St Ann's) while leaving Preston Street itself in one ward (Abbey)</p> <p>Move the north side of West Street and Water Lane from Abbey West to St Ann's East. This is a small change but contributes to the more even allocation of electors to councillors and has the advantage of also bring all of West Street into one ward (St Ann's)</p>
Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow	2	4107	-5%	<p>Iwade itself is too big to be a one-member ward, even without Lower Halstow, so needs to be increased to be a two-member ward.</p> <p>Adding Bobbing to Iwade and Lower Halstow it is within tolerance at -5%. Use the A249 as the new boundary for Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow.</p> <p>Tidying up the boundary with Kemsley, Featherbed Lane and Sheppey way are moved into Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow from Kemsley and boundary redrawn along A249.</p> <p>There are strong community ties linking these three villages. The Primary Schools at Iwade and Bobbing are working as a Federation. The villages of Bobbing and Lower Halstow</p>

				are combined as one cricket club, with four teams using the 2 different grounds. The socio economic character of the three villages is similar. They each have a commuter community, there are a number of families in each working in agriculture and they each have Parish Councils with linked concerns.
Borden and Grove Park	2	4716	+9%	<p>Add Heart's Delight road into Borden from Woodstock (WOT).</p> <p>Add the part of Maylam Gardens and the Westlands area into Borden from Grove South.</p> <p>Add the Grove Park estate into Borden from Grove. (GBE&GS)</p> <p>Add Borden Lane and the Auckland Drive estate into Borden from Woodstock North.</p> <p>Borden then becomes a two member ward Borden and Grove Park at +9%.</p> <p>This ward would have a stronger sense of community than the previous Grove ward which was disparate, divided between the Grove Park Estate, the village of Bobbing and the expanding Meads Estate.</p> <p>We believe it will be in the better interests of Borden to have 2 Council representatives. A</p>

				<p>substantial part of Borden is in the same geographical location around the Gore Court Cricket Club as the Grove Park Estate.</p> <p>Many people from the London Road part of Borden shop and mix with residents of the Grove Park Estate by shopping in Gadby Rd.</p>
Boughton and Courtney	2	4395	+2%	<p>We are suggesting no changes for this ward. Continuity and awareness of rural issues suggest that this is a coherent ward.</p>
Chalkwell and The Meads	2	4323	0%	<p>The Meads on its own could be a one member ward, but this is not an ideal solution.</p> <p>Combine the Meads with Chalkwell North and the North West Corner of St Michaels North down to and including the High Street.</p> <p>This makes Chalkwell and the Meads which is exactly average at 0%.</p> <p>This brings the Meads Estate into a ward where there is much better road and service connectivity than is experienced in the Grove Ward.</p> <p>Residents in this new ward would share common concerns on highways issues but also on the provision of other public services such as a GP surgery.</p> <p>People living in Chalkwell North are beginning to use the public house at the Meads as their</p>

				“local” and residents of the Meads use the shopping facilities in Chalkwell road, and in future are likely to also use the new Supermarket on the old M Real site.
Davington Priory	1	2057	-5%	We are suggesting no changes for this ward.
East Downs	1	2137	-1%	We are suggesting no changes for this ward.
Eastern	2	4465	+3%	<p>Eastern is created from the whole of the existing Leysdown and Warden Ward, together with Eastchurch (SCE), and the Eastern end of the existing Minster Cliffs East (Bell Farm Lane, Cliff Gardens, Danedale Avenue, Eastchurch Road, Oak Avenue, Oak Lane, Plough Road and Windmill Rise)</p> <p>In terms of community identity, we regard this as one of the most important key changes to the previous arrangement.</p> <p>The interests of Eastchurch are much more consistent and better defined, by being connected to the other East Sheppey parishes. These include the provision of Primary School education, the quality of public transport and the road network, especially the Lower Road from Leysdown, through Eastchurch.</p>
Hartlip, Newington and	2	4513	+5%	Not easy to change and is within tolerance at

Upchurch				<p>+5% so leave as it is.</p> <p>This will provide continuity and it recognises the reasonably close ties between the three villages and the common concerns that residents have there.</p>
Homewood	2	4635	+7%	<p>Create Homewood from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australian estate from Grove - South Chalkwell - Woodstock North without Auckland Drive estate and Borden Lane - A few roads from Woodstock South (WOS), Riddles Road and the area around Chaucer Road (Hill Brow, West Ridge and Windsor Drive) - Park Road area and Town Centre up to Bell Road from St Michaels North - Rest of Roonagh Court from St Michaels South <p>This makes Homewood within Tolerance at +7%</p> <p>This ward will effectively represent the inner suburbs of South Sittingbourne. As such, it will have a community of interest and character, which is not so strongly found in the existing St Michaels Ward, or to an extent in the existing Woodstock ward. It puts the residents of Chalkwell South into a distinct south ward context, which is an improvement on the present Chalkwell Ward, which is</p>

				<p>divided quite significantly at the London Road.</p> <p>The Homewood ward would be socially mixed, but it would share common concerns, about traffic and parking, urban development and retail opportunities. Many of the children in this area attend the Westlands School, at both Primary and Secondary stages.</p> <p>We believe this ward would be a more vibrant community than the Chalkwell, Woodstock, St Michaels and Grove wards, which it replaces in parts.</p>
Kemsley	2	4186	-3%	<p>Kemsley has borders with Iwade, Grove, Milton and Murston, so to reduce size of Kemsley, have to move part of the ward to one of it's neighbours. There is no real connection to Murston, Iwade or Grove and the creek or the A249 between them. These three also do not need extra voters.</p> <p>Logical choice is to move some of Kemsley into Milton. The South West corner of the current Kemsley Ward is moved to Milton, along with the rest of Green Porch Close.</p> <p>This makes both Kemsley and Milton Regis within tolerance.</p> <p>Tidying up the boundary with Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow, Featherbed Lane and</p>

				<p>Sheppey way are moved into Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow from Kemsley and boundary redrawn along A249.</p> <p>Kemsley is a distinct suburb of Sittingbourne and this proposal provides a large degree of important continuity for the people who live there.</p>
Milton Regis	2	4285	-1%	<p>The South West corner of the current Kemsley Ward is moved to Milton, along with the rest of Green Porch Close.</p> <p>This makes Milton Regis at -1% within tolerance.</p> <p>This proposal retains the core of the current Milton Regis ward.</p>
Minster Cliffs	2	4249	-2%	<p>Minster Cliffs is comprised of the existing MCC without Minster Road, MCE without the Eastern End, and the rest of MCW excluding the roads in Sheerness East and Minster West. This is an identifiable community, with a common interest in the range of services available and the impact of many unmade roads.</p>
Minster East	2	3983	-8%	<p>Minster East is created from the whole of the existing SCS and SCM with Fleetwood Close</p>

				and Worcester Close from SCW.
Minster West	2	4362	+1%	Minster West is created from the whole of SCW except Fleetwood Close and Worcester Close, the rest of QHE, Minster Road from MCC and the following Roads from MCW (Edwina, Johnson, Kent, Magpie, Mallard, Marian, Marina, Noreen and Half of the Broadway)
Murston	2	4408	+2%	<p>Predicted growth in Murston moves the Ward from -5% to +2%, still within tolerance and it does not easily combine with neighbouring wards so keep as it is.</p> <p>Murston, like other parts of Sittingbourne, is a distinct area, with older residents still referring to it as a “village”. It is important to retain its name and core structure.</p> <p>It is important too, that the East Hall Estate is drawn into a sense of belonging to Murston.</p>
Queenborough	2	4076	-6%	Queenborough becomes a 2-member ward composed of the existing areas of QQ, QR, QHW and Lynsted Road from QHE. This concentrates on the traditional town of Queenborough and its adjacent estate at Rushenden. This community clearly shares common services, such as the Primary School, the railway station and the library. It has a sense of place. To meet the numerical

				<p>criterion, it is necessary to include part of the previous Halfway polling district, but this area is as conscious of its links with Queenborough as it is with Halfway Corner, sharing, inter alia, the petrol station and public house and restaurant at Queenborough Corner.</p>
Roman	2	4701	+9%	<p>Adding Bapchild to Roman would make it +7% but it makes no logical sense to take Bapchild away from West Downs.</p> <p>Splitting Roman to add part of it to West Downs does not seem logical as part of an urban area is then combined with the rural villages.</p> <p>Natural solution is to move some of St Michaels into Roman.</p> <p>Roman to gain the North East corner of St Michaels North down to Stanhope Avenue, including the East side of Bell Rd.</p> <p>The area of St Michaels which we propose being part of Roman, was until 2001, in the Roman Ward.</p> <p>Socially it is very much in character with Roman ward. Children in this area go to the South Avenue or Canterbury Road schools, and the people in this new Roman ward would have very common concerns about the Town centre, about traffic and about transport links.</p>

				There will be more social housing in this ward than is common in most parts of Swale.
Rural Sittingbourne	1	2335	+8%	As Tunstall has aligned itself with the rest of West Downs to form the Five Parishes – see website (http://www.fiveparishes.org.uk/standard.aspx?i_PageID=11195) - Move Tunstall village and everything South from Woodstock(WOT) to make the only one member Sittingbourne ward Rural Sittingbourne at +8%
Sheerness East	2	4050	-6%	Existing ward gains Halfway Road and Power Station Road from Minster Cliffs West and the Northern part of QHE (Buddle Drive, Danley Road, Filer Road, Halfway Road, Power Station Road, Scotchmen Close, St. Katherine Road and William Rigby Drive) This proposal extends Sheerness beyond its present built up environment. However it links Sheerness East with a part of the previous Halfway area that looks to Sheerness as its immediate retail and service provider. The development of a new Supermarket in the part of Halfway closest to Sheerness will see residents of Sheerness East also looking to

				<p>Halfway as its convenience goods outlet. Traditionally, this part of Halfway was known as Sheerness East, and the Sheerness East Working Mens Club is in Halfway.</p> <p>The alternative to this proposal is to make Sheerness Town into either a 3 member ward, or into a 2 member plus 1 member split. In an area of considerable challenge for members, we believe this would be a worse outcome than the one we propose, either creating a ward that is too large for local intimacy of contact, or leaving part of a challenging town in the hands of a single member.</p>
Sheerness West	2	3918	-9%	No change to existing ward. This will provide continuity in a challenging social environment.
Sittingbourne South	2	4553	+6%	<p>Create Sittingbourne South from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St Michaels South (except Roonagh Court) - Woodstock(WOT) above Tunstall village - Rest of St Michaels North – South of Stanhope Avenue - Rest of Woodstock South (WOS) up to and including Minterne Avenue <p>This makes Sittingbourne South within tolerance at +6%</p> <p>Just as the creation of a Homewood Ward will</p>

				<p>create a representative base for the inner suburbs of Sittingbourne, so this ward will become a natural link across the outer suburbs of South Sittingbourne.</p> <p>Physically it forms a natural community. The children here have a preference for Minterne Primary School, and if they are not Grammar Schools students, the Fulston Manor School.</p>
St Ann's	2	4104	-5%	<p>St Ann's is currently predicted to be 8% under variance, so this is improved by receiving two areas from Abbey Ward.</p> <p>Move the area west of Preston Street (but not Preston Street itself) and south of the central car park (Bank Street, Cross Lane, Dorset Place, Forbes Road, Stone Street, Union Street, Victoria Place) from Abbey West to St Ann's East. This is an area of small terraced properties with no room for development. This would bring all of Stone Street and roads off of it into one ward (St Ann's) while leaving Preston Street itself in one ward (Abbey)</p> <p>Move the north side of West Street and Water Lane from Abbey West to St Ann's East. This is part of the town centre shopping area with flats over shops. This is a small change but</p>

				contributes to the more even allocation of electors to councillors and has the advantage of also bring all of West Street into one ward (St Ann's)
Teynham and Lynsted	2	4124	-4%	<p>Within tolerance, so keep as it is .</p> <p>This will provide continuity. There are long term links between the parishes that make up this ward and we see no justification from breaking these.</p>
Watling	2	4442	+3%	<p>Watling is currently predicted to be 6% under variance, so this is improved by receiving an area from Abbey Ward.</p> <p>Move Love Lane estate (Ambleside, Buttermere, Ennerdale, Les Spickett Close, Love Lane, and Windermere) from Abbey East to Watling East. The area was in Watling ward prior to the last change for the elections in 2002 and used the Preston School room as a polling station. This polling station has recently been brought back into service for Watling West.</p> <p>The Love Lane Estate is a self-contained</p>

				estate bounded by the two railway lines to the East of Faversham and love Lane with little room for more development.