

Maidstone Borough Council

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Organisation Name: Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council

Comment text:

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council's response to the consultation is attached.

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1648045871_BMPC+boundary+commission+review+response+23.3.22.pdf)

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council

Chairman: Cllr Stephen Munford

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL (MBC) 2022

Submission from Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council – 23rd March 2022

We refer to the electoral review of Maidstone Borough Council which you are currently undertaking and submit the following proposal for your consideration.

1. WARD SIZE

Since reorganisation of Local Government in 1974 the Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton ward has been a one-member ward, represented by only 4 Councillors in all that time, all residing in the ward. In addition, for the last 40 years the ward has been served by Independent Councillors with no political affiliation. These facts reflect the importance which the current ward electors put on the representative role, where they expect a hands-on approach to handling issues raised by local residents and responding to questions in a thorough manner. This is best maintained by Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton remaining a one-member ward.

Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton have clear and long-established alliances having worked together in a single member ward very successfully for almost 50 years and are committed to continuing to provide an electoral ward that reflects the special needs and expectations of our community.

Our current ward reflects the common community interests which Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton have together, the main ones being :

- Schools (for many years the Boughton Monchelsea / Chart Sutton community shared a primary school and still share a secondary school)
- Agricultural activities and links. The agricultural businesses overlap both parishes with workers traditionally from each parish and working across the two parishes
- Shared transport and travel issues
- Environmental planning and actions
- Co-ordinated flood emergency measures / plan
- Long established social and business links between the two parishes
- Residents from both villages belong to the same community groups such as the Community Choir, Bowls Club and children from both villages attend the Play Group.

The current ward arrangement provides reliable, efficient and effective local government that delivers for the electorate and in turn the residents across all age groups respond with a very high voter turnout that supports our proposals that the current ward boundary should form the basis for the ward boundary going forward as a one-member ward.

2. PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY

If the Commission confirms a Council size of 48 members then we strongly recommend that the current ward boundary for Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton should form the basis of a new one member ward thereby securing the bonds and relationships which have been built up within the existing ward BUT with the following changes.

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council

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The new residential developments of the Joywood, Furfield Park and Roman Way estates consisting of some 500 to 600 electors are currently in the Park Wood ward and it is appropriate for them to come into the Boughton Monchelsea / Chart Sutton ward. This would then give the new Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton ward just over 3000 electors which is within the Commission's 5% tolerance and for Park Wood ward will reduce its expected electorate for 2027 to some 6500 electors which for a two-member ward would also be within the Commission's tolerance.

More importantly the Joywood, Furfield Park and Roman Way estates are within the parish of Boughton Monchelsea and their electors' affinity and loyalty is with Boughton Monchelsea which they view as their "natural home", not Park Wood. This is supported by the following evidence.

- A referendum in the early 2000's showed that the residents of these developments considered themselves to be residents of Boughton Monchelsea
- Residents from these estates are Parish Councillors
- A country park adjoining Furfield Park is managed and maintained by the Parish Council and is enjoyed by residents of the three estates and the wider parish
- Residents from the three estates look to Boughton Monchelsea's local and social organisations to join rather than Park Wood organisations such as the Play Group and have leading roles in the Scout Group and Community Choir

Maidstone Borough Council's submission recognises the challenges the existing Parkwood members face serving the diverse nature of the Park Wood ward community. To help address this in part and for completeness it would be entirely logical for the Joywood, Furfield Park and Roman Way estates to join the Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton ward, thus lifting some of the burden from the Park Wood ward.

3. CONCLUSION

We would respectfully request that the commission give our proposal its full consideration as we believe that the arrangement to maintain a single member ward for Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton to include additionally the new estates of Joywood, Furfield Park and Roman Way, provides electoral equality and continued efficient and effective local government.

BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA PARISH COUNCIL