

Committee Report

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Rochford District Council

To the Meeting of: PARTNERSHIP SUB-COMMITTEE

On: 25 JANUARY 2000

Report of: HEAD OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND MEMBER SERVICES

Title: PERIODIC REVIEW OF DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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Report approved by

Purpose of Report

This report provides information on the District Council's draft proposals for change to its electoral arrangements.

Background

The Local Government Commission is currently undertaking a review of the District Council's electoral arrangements. The aim of this review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each District Councillor is the same for all Councillors. The Commission has invited the District Council and other interested parties to submit representations by 28 February 2000.

District Council proposals

The District Council has now agreed on a draft submission to the Local Government Commission containing proposals to improve the Council's electoral arrangements. A copy of this draft submission and an overview map outlining the extent of the proposals is attached to this report. The individual maps referred to in the text will be available at the meeting.

Appendix A of the submission sets out the detailed arrangements for the review and the criteria which the Commission requires the Council to take into account when formulating proposals for change. Members will also find full information at section 2 on the current District and Town and Parish Council electoral arrangements that exist within Rochford.

Members will note that, at present, the number of electors represented by each Councillor varies between 28% below the district wide average in Hullbridge South and 39% above the average in Hockley West. The Chief Executive of the Local Government Commission has made clear to the Council that there needs to be

significant change in the Council's electoral arrangements in order to eliminate the current variations.

Section 4 of the submission therefore contains details of proposed changes in the Council's electoral arrangements. As required by the Commission, the section addresses the future total number of councillors that should serve on the Council, the number of councillors that should represent each Ward, Ward boundaries and the future name of Wards and the frequency that elections should be held for the Council. Detailed justification is also provided for each of the Council's proposals. The electorate figures used for the proposed Wards are those that are projected to exist in 2004. This is a requirement of the Local Government Commission who want to make sure that any changes will not be quickly overtaken by further population growth.

The implications of the proposals for Town and Parish Councils are shown in section 5 of the draft submission. As a matter of principle, the District Council has sought to avoid introducing Parish warding arrangements to those Parishes that do not already have them already. However, Parishes that are already warded will find changes in the boundaries of many of these. This is because of the statutory requirement that the whole of a Parish Ward must lie in the same District Ward and that the boundaries of the Parish Ward must therefore be the same as those of the new District Ward. The Council has calculated representation for Parish Wards using the current total number of councillors on each Parish Council. In selecting the year of election for District Councillors, the Council has tried to ensure that District Council elections will be combined with the ordinary elections of Parish Councils.

Meeting the Commission's criteria

The recommendations within the draft submission meet in nearly all cases the criteria set down by the Local Government Commission. The exception to this as Members will note are the proposals for Hullbridge. However, the Council believes that every attempt should be made to persuade the Local Government Commission to depart from its normal rules in recognition of the distinct community identity that exists within this Parish.

Consultation

The District Council is currently undertaking public consultation on its draft proposals. The County Council and all Town and Parish Councils will be receiving their own copy of the submission and accompanying maps. The District Council has pledged to take account of all the responses received when deciding what its final submission should be to the Local Government Commission.

Further stages in the review

The attention of Members is drawn to appendix A of the draft submission. This sets out the timetable for the future stages of the review.

Crime and Disorder Implications

None

Environmental Implications

None

Financial Implications

The cost of making the District Council's submission will be met from within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

The review is being carried out under powers contained within the Local Government Act 1972.

Parish Implications

Changes in the District Council's electoral arrangements may result in changes being made to the electoral arrangements of Town and Parish Councils. Town and Parish Councils have the opportunity to make a submission to the Local Government Commission on their own proposals for change in the District Council's electoral arrangements.

Proposed that the Sub-Committee considers the attached draft submission and maps and **RECOMMENDS** to the District Council on the proposals contained within the submission.

Background Papers – Procedural Guidance from the Local Government Commission.