

ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report invites the Committee to agree the recommendations of the Electoral Review Working Group which met on 4 July 2000 to consider this Council's response to the Local Government Commission's draft recommendation for the future electoral arrangements in the District.
- 1.2 The Commission's review is statutory but it is up to the Council to determine whether it wishes to respond to any proposals put forward by the Commission.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The aim of the review has been to try and ensure that the number of electors represented by each Councillor is the same across the District. A copy of the Commission's review report, published on 20 June 2000, has been sent to all Members of the Council. Large scale maps showing the Commission's proposals will be available at the meeting.

3 PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

- 3.1 The Working Group noted that although the Commission favoured the retention of a 40 Member Council with elections by thirds, the boundaries of the 20 new Wards it proposed are considerably different to those put forward by the District Council in its own submission to the Commission.
- 3.2 Unlike the Council's proposals, the Commission had appeared to focus on the need for electoral equality at the expense of community identity and effective and convenient Local Government. Where public comment had been made previously, for example in the case of the whole of Deepdene Avenue being included in a single Ward, this had been ignored. Similarly, the desire to amalgamate South Hullbridge with West Hockley had caused consequential boundary changes across Rochford which served to blur the strong traditions of community identity that currently exist.
- 3.3 The Working Group also expressed its concern at the creation of a single Member Ward for Hockley North and a three Member Ward for Rochford.
- 3.4 The Working Group had before it the views of Ashingdon Parish Council and Councillor Mason.

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- 3.5 The Group noted that the Commission was now consulting on its proposals and the Council had until 4 September to decide on any response it wished to make. An item inviting Public comment had been placed in the Summer edition of "Rochford District Matters" and the issue had been included on the Agenda for the Partnership Sub-Committee on 20 July 2000. The Group hoped that Town and Parish Councils would submit their own views direct to the Commission and agreed that the Head of Administrative and Member Services should provide any assistance that they might need with this. The Group further agreed that the support of the press should be sought to encourage Public response.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The level of resources required in submitting a response to the Commission will depend on what type of response the Council decides to make. As before, most of the cost is likely to be in officer time.

5 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The consequential effects of the Commission's draft proposals are set out in the Commission's review report.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- 1 That the following forms the basis of the Council's response to the Local Government Commissions' draft recommendations for the future electoral arrangements in Rochford: -
- (a) That this Council concurs with the recommendation that Rochford District Council should be represented by 40 Councillors in 20 Wards and that elections should take place by thirds.
 - (b) That whilst this Council is broadly happy with the boundaries which have been set for the Rayleigh wards, with the exception of the area surrounding Deepdene Avenue, it is extremely concerned that in other areas the recommendations have been based on a desire to achieve electoral equality alone and unlike the District Council's proposals had not given adequate account to the other statutory criteria of community identity, and effective and convenient local government.
 - (c) That it be re-iterated to the Commission that the consequential changes in the Parish Council election arrangements should not take effect until the date of the first next ordinary date of election after 2002. (HAMS)

- 2 (a) That a letter be sent to the Chairman and Clerk of every Parish/Town Council offering to give assistance in drafting a letter of response to the Local Government Commission. (HAMS)
- (b) That the local press be invited to give publicity to the Local Government' Commissions recommendations. (HCPI)

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Background Papers:

Local Government Commission for England - Draft Recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rochford in Essex.

For further information please contact Andrew Smith on (01702) 318135.