
REVIEW OF DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the progress of the review of District Council electoral arrangements.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 29 March 2001, the Local Government Commission for England published its final recommendations for the review of District Council electoral arrangements. These recommendations are made to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and Regions who must decide whether to accept, modify or reject the proposals.
- 2.2 A copy of the Commission's recommendations has been sent to each Member of the Council.

3 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Commission has confirmed its further draft recommendations for Rochford considered by this Council last December subject to their being modified to take account of the Council's request for minor amendments to the proposed Hockley North District Ward boundary and the Great Wakering Parish Central and West Ward boundaries. The Commission is therefore proposing:
- a reduction from 40 to 39 District Councillors
 - a reduction from 23 to 19 wards
 - the modification of the boundaries of 21 existing wards, with 2 wards maintaining their current boundaries
 - elections to continue by thirds
 - consequential changes to parish electoral boundaries

4 IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 If the Secretary of State confirms the Commission's recommendations, these will be the subject of an Order to be laid before Parliament not earlier than 10 May 2001. It is anticipated that the date of implementation of the changes will remain as May 2002, when the District Council will be required to hold all out elections based on the new ward boundaries. Councillors elected at that time would then serve varying terms of office to bring the Council back to a cycle of elections by thirds.

5 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As a result of changes to the District Council's electoral arrangements, the Local Government Commission is recommending the following consequential changes in Parish electoral arrangements.
- revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Ashingdon, Hawkwell, Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford
 - revised warding arrangements for the parish of Great Wakering
- 5.2 In order to avoid the burden of the cost of elections for these parishes in May 2002, the District Council previously recommended that consequential parish changes should take effect from the first ordinary elections for each town and parish council following 1 May 2002. The Local Government Commission in its final report has not picked up this request. However, strictly speaking, it is an issue for the Secretary of State to consider rather than the Commission and Members may wish to consider lobbying the Secretary of State before 10 May deadline to this effect. Members are reminded that whilst such a move will have cost benefits for those parishes not already scheduled to hold elections in 2002, additional administrative work will arise for the District Council as a result of the need to create and maintain temporary polling districts in some parishes. Any costs would be in staff time and could be absorbed within the general workload of the elections office.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The total cost of this review to the District Council is estimated at £15,000 and will be met from core estimates.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The review of District Council electoral arrangements is statutory.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The District Council has achieved a notable success in persuading the Local Government Commission to revise its original draft recommendations for Rochford. The revised final recommendations are much closer to the wishes of the District Council to see electoral arrangements in place that reflect the local sense of community identity and historical ties that exist within Rochford. The Committee is therefore invited to **RESOLVE** to inform the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and Regions that the Council now accepts the final recommendations of the Local Government Commission for the District of Rochford.

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- 8.2 Members may however wish to ask the Partnership Sub-Committee (meeting on 19 April) to consider whether to continue to lobby the Secretary of State to implement consequential parish electoral changes from the first ordinary elections after 1 May 2002. This will provide an opportunity for the Town and Parish Councils affected to input their views on what is primarily a parish issue. The Committee could then authorise the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) to submit a response to the Secretary of State based on the outcome of that Sub-Committee's deliberations. (HAMS)

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Background Papers:

"Final Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Rochford in Essex", Local Government Commission – 29 March 2001.

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