

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 9 March 2022
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore (Vice-Chairman), Cooper, English, Hastie, McKay,
Perry, Purlé (Chairman), Russell and R Webb

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AMENDED AGENDA

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 February 2022
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
10. Question and Answer Session for Members of the Public
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
12. Committee Work Programme
13. Reports of Outside Bodies
14. Trustee Appointment to the Relief in Need Charities
15. New Constitution

Issued on Thursday 3 March 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Monday 7 March 2022). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Monday 7 March 2022). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Democracy and General Purposes Committee

9 March 2022

Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communication and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O’Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s (LGBCE) consultation on a warding scheme for the Maidstone Borough as part of the Local Government Boundary Review they are conducting.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The response to the LGBCE consultation on ward boundaries, set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, be recommended to Council for submission to the LGBCE; and
2. That delegated authority be given to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to make minor refinements to boundaries and text in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 ahead of Council.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	9 March 2022
Council	13 April 2022

Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Whilst the Local Government Boundary Review doesn't directly contribute to the council's corporate priorities, it does contribute to all of them indirectly by ensuring that the council's wards and electoral arrangements are fit for purpose and provide for electoral equality as well as achieving the statutory objectives of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral Equality • Community Identity • Effective and Convenient Local Government 	<p>Democratic and Electoral Services Manager</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>See impact on corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Democratic and Electoral Services Manager</p>
<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>The LGBR is run the by the LGBCE and the Council's role is to provide a submission to the consultation that meets the LGBCE's</p>	<p>Democratic and Electoral</p>

	statutory objectives and makes the most convincing case for a warding scheme that benefits Maidstone. The primary risk in this work is that Council submits a proposal that is not fit for purpose. The principles and process followed manage that risk.	Services Manager
Financial	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	The staffing from this project is provided from existing staffing drawn from several teams. There is no financial impact to this, but it represents an opportunity cost as the staff spend their time on this project. The limited timescales for the project mean that this is manageable.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	The review is being conducted by the LGBCE under its powers in The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.	Legal Team
Privacy and Data Protection	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	Achieving electoral equality is one of the statutory objectives of the Local Government Boundary Review.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Public Health	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
--	-----------------	---

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report is the next in a series of reports to deliver the necessary response to the LGBCE on Maidstone Borough's Local Government Boundary Review. At its last meeting the Democracy and General Purposes Committee agreed a set of principles to be used to draw up a consultation response on a new ward scheme to the LGBCE.
- 2.2 Since the last meeting two workshops and an all-day Member event have been held. The officer project team have worked to refine and amend, in accordance with feedback from Members, the initial boundary proposals shown to Democracy and General Purposes Committee on 16 February 2022.
- 2.3 In addition to the workshops and all-day event, Members have fed back individually about specific areas which has been considered and factored in and discussed at the workshops where necessary.
- 2.4 The result of this work is the proposed boundary scheme set out at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 Appendix 2 sets out the justifications for specific boundaries where there is a need to make the case to the LGBCE on why we have made certain choices.
- 2.6 Following the workshops, it was requested that an option be put before the Committee to split Vinters Park and Grove Green into a single and a two Member ward instead of the proposed combined three Member ward. However, after analysis and refining the data used this is not possible without creating an imbalance in electoral equality. This imbalance has been rectified by combining the areas, in addition to moving Mote Park from Central Maidstone to Vinters Park and Grove Green.
- 2.7 Naming remains an issue that needs to be resolved. Feedback has been received from Members directly on names and some of the wards have been changed to reflect this. However, it is important to note that even once submitted to the LGBCE the names are not set in stone. The LGBCE will decide their preferred boundaries and names in April and May and then conduct a second round of consultation in the summer on their proposals. It is recommended that the committee provide some feedback on the names now if they wish, but ultimately the naming issues will be resolved in the summer when comments can be made on the LGBCE's proposals.
- 2.8 The response outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 forms the proposed response from Council to the LGBCE, with final approval required by Full Council on 13 April 2022. By publishing them early, a month before they are

approved, it is hoped that will provide opportunity for community groups, parishes, Members and others to consider the Council's response. Whilst the commission will give the Council's response no inherent additional weight over any other, it is understood that the Council's proposals will be seen as giving a steer to others. With that in mind the Committee, and Members more generally, are asked to respond directly to the LGBCE consultation and to encourage others to do so too.

- 2.9 Communications from the Council on the LGBCE consultation and the need for groups and individuals to respond directly to the LGBCE have been ongoing, including social media, newspapers and radio. Please note that whilst the Council has an extension to 13 April 2022, the actual consultation for the public closes on 4 April 2022.
- 2.10 The Committee are also requested to provide a delegation to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to enable minor tweaks of boundaries and text. This delegation is needed in case minor flaws with the boundaries are identified post-Committee by Members or Officers, such as a boundary passing through someone's garden, or if it would be better to include a particular non-residential building in a different Ward. These changes would be consulted with a relevant (current) Ward Member where required.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 – recommend to Council that Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 be submitted to the LGBCE as the Council's consultation response.
- 3.2 Option 2 – to consider alternatives the Committee may have to these proposals as recommendations to Council.
- 3.3 Option 3 – not make a recommendation to Council such that the Council does not submit a consultation response to the LGBCE.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is preferred as these proposals are the result of significant work and consultation with Members representing the best balance of achieving the LGBCE's three objectives and what the Council wants to achieve.
- 4.2 Option 3 is definitely not recommended as this would realise the main project risk set out in the cross-cutting table.

5. RISK

See Risk Section in cross cutting table above. All risks are within the Council's risk appetite.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Significant consultation has been undertaken with both the Democracy and General Purposes Committee and Members more widely. Some of this has been covered in the introduction and background section above.
 - 6.2 This consultation on boundaries is being run by the LGBCE, not Maidstone Borough Council, and as set out in 2.8 and 2.9 all other bodies and individuals are encouraged to respond to the LGBCE directly.
 - 6.3 The LGBCE will be running a further consultation in the summer on their proposed boundaries and the Council will respond to that too, including with regard to the naming of Wards.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Committee's recommendation would be made to Council on 13 April 2022 for subsequent submission to the commission.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

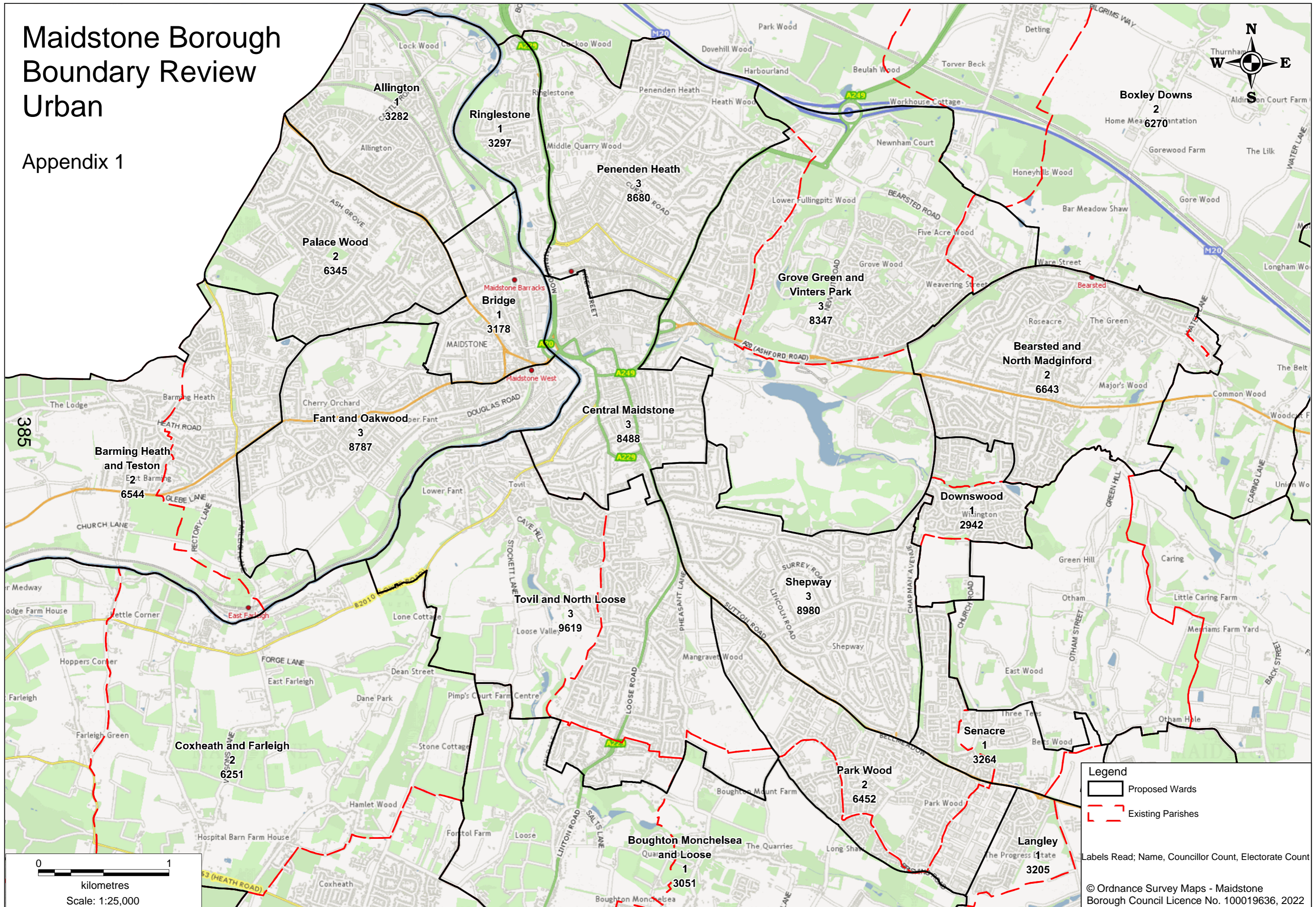
- Appendix 1: Proposed Ward Scheme - Maps
 - Appendix 2: Proposed Ward Scheme – Boundary Explanation
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Democracy and General Purposes Committee – 16 February 2022

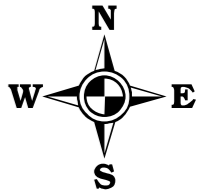
Maidstone Borough Boundary Review Urban

Appendix 1

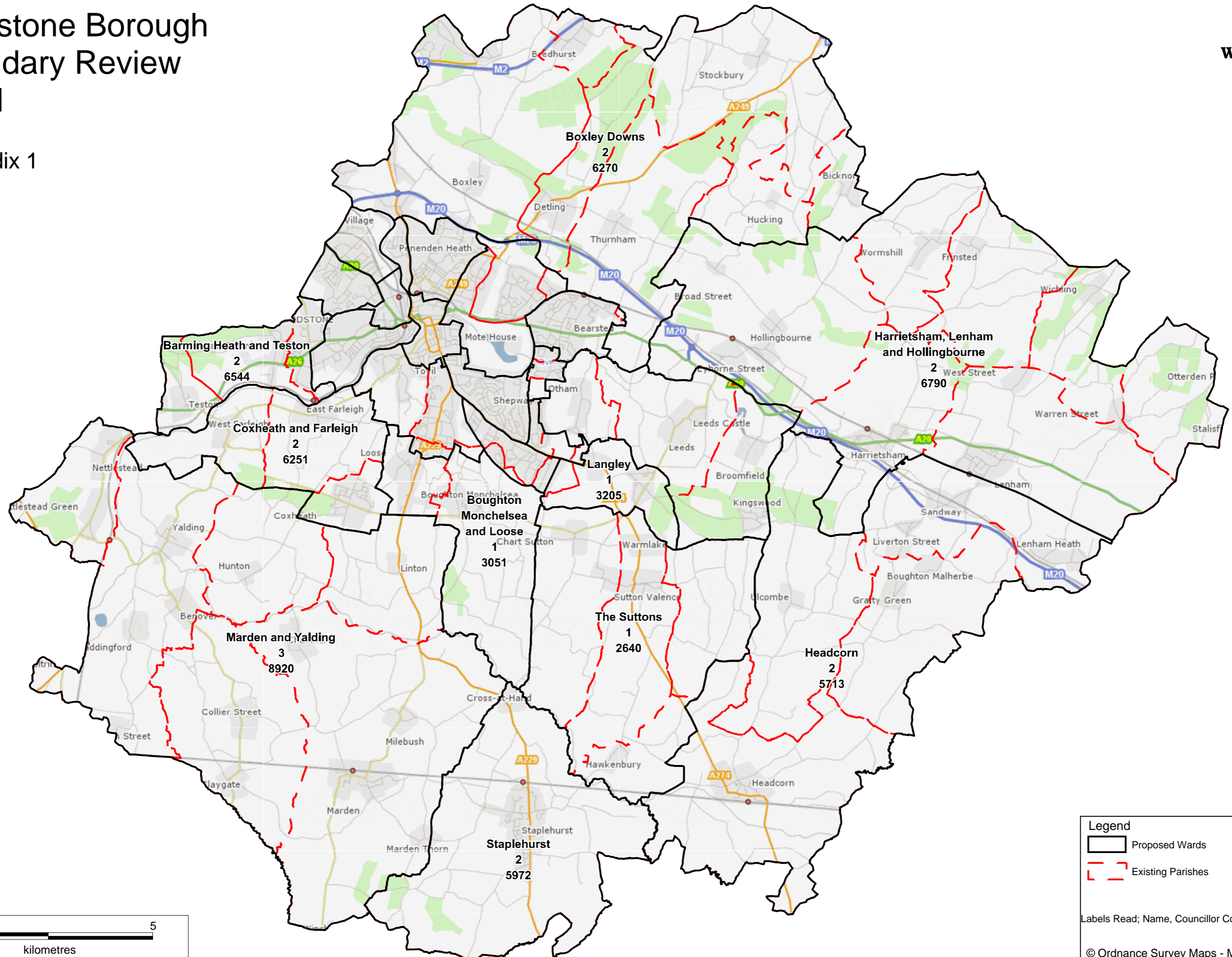


Maidstone Borough Boundary Review Rural

Appendix 1



386



kilometres
Scale: 1:85,000

Legend

- Proposed Wards
- Existing Parishes

Labels Read; Name, Councillor Count, Electorate Count

© Ordnance Survey Maps - Maidstone
Borough Council Licence No. 100019636, 2022

Ward Boundaries Narrative for Submission to LGBCE**Barming Heath and Teston – 2 Members – 6,544 (+7%)**

The significant proportion of the population of Barming is in the East of the parish area and links in with the urban area as an extension of it. The rural elements of Barming Parish do not have enough electorate to be warded and form a link to Teston, with the A26 being a physical link between the two communities. The boundaries are dictated by the borough boundary to the North and West, the parish boundary to the South and the strong identities of the urban area to the East where Fant is a recognised area of Maidstone.

Fant and Oakwood – 3 Members – 8,787 (-4%)

Fant and Oakwood are areas with strong identities either side of the A26. In the West the boundary has been drawn up to and including Fant Farm in the rural area, as well as recognising the parts of the urban area that identify as Fant rather than Barming. The Southern/Western boundary is the river and to the North the boundary has been drawn around the Oakwood Park area south of the communities that identify more with the A20 area.

Palace Wood – 2 Members – 6,345 (+4%)

Palace Wood is centred around the Palace Wood estate area to the West of the Borough and South of the A20.

Allington – 1 Member – 3,282 (+8%)

The area of Allington has a strong identity in Maidstone and goes out to the North to the river taking in Allington Castle.

Bridge – 1 Member – 3,178 (+4%)

The Bridge Ward covers the area around the A20 with an identity more towards the Town Centre than those to the west and abuts up against the strong river boundary.

Ringlestone – 1 Member – 3,297 (+8%)

The Ringlestone estate has seen a lot of electoral growth recently and has sufficient numbers to be its own discreet ward with two very strong boundaries of the river to the West and the A229 (dual carriage way), Royal Engineers Way to the East.

Penenden Heath – 3 Members – 8,680 (-5%)

Penenden Heath is a recognised historic area of Maidstone. It has a strong western boundary in the A229, the M20 to the North and the A249 to the East. The Southern boundary has been drawn along the existing polling district line of Union Street. This ensures electoral equality whilst using a road that is a more significant road than others off of Week Street as it connects out of town and into the main road system.

Grove Green and Vinters Park – 3 Members – 8,347 (-9%)

Grove Green and Vinters Park share a commonality of being areas that have similar proximities to the Town Centre, and access to the out of town retail to the north. The ward is centred around the school complex and green space. Consideration was given to splitting these areas into two distinct wards as both Grove Green and Vinters Park have their own strong sense of identity. However, this would both create an incongruous shaped ward and not be within tolerance on electoral

equality. Mote Park to the south serves many parts of Maidstone as such a large park in an urban area, but has been included in this ward for reasons of electoral equality.

Central Maidstone – 3 Members – 8,488 (-7%)

Central Maidstone Ward covers the Town Centre of Maidstone and dense residential areas of a similar nature around the town centre. The boundaries have been set as the river to the west, Union Street to the north (see Penenden Heath), Tovil and Armstrong Road to the south (allowing for South Park to be included in a single ward) and the distinct area of Shepway.

Tovil and North Loose – 3 Members – 9,619 (+5%)

Tovil is a Parished area with a strong and recognisable identity in Maidstone and is linked with North Loose, a defined neighbourhood plan area with an active neighbourhood forum. There are links between Tovil and Loose via Cave Hill and Stockett Lane to Loose Valley. The southern boundary of North Loose has been extended to encompass the urban growth in Loose Parish as the development there currently bridges the ward line. The boundary line has been drawn specifically to include an area of future development to the south-eastern corner of the Loose urban extension. South Park has been included north of Armstrong Road on the Northern boundary too in order to aid with convenient and effective local government.

Bearsted and North Madginford – 2 Members – 6,643 (+9%)

The parished area of Bearsted to the east of Maidstone is a clear and strong area of identity centred around the A20. This ward covers the whole of the identified area of Bearsted and the older part of Madginford. To the north the parts of Thurnham parish that identify and share issues with Bearsted have been brought into Bearsted. The boundary line has been drawn along the parish boundary where possible, but to the south the boundary uses the roads that best identify Bearsted from the Madginford area. The boundary drawn along Egremont road has been used because the properties to the north are distinct from the south of the road being built in the 60s with those south of the line built much later.

Downswood – 1 Member – 2,942 (-3%)

This ward takes in the communities of South Madginford, Downswood and significant planned growth (some 600 properties) to the west of Church Road which will form linkages to Downswood rather than Otham village. The build out rates for the Church Road development are planned to have more than 65 dwellings built by May 2024 allowing it to be parish warded.

Shepway – 3 Members – 8980 (-2%)

Shepway is a distinct area of Maidstone. Historically it has been split into North and South, and West and East, but this proposed ward recognises the area in its entirety. The boundaries are clear, with the eastern boundary drawn to recognise the discreet area of Senacre along the Sutton Road.

Senacre – 1 Member – 3,264 (+7%)

There is extensive new development coming in along the Sutton Road to the southeast of Maidstone. The Senacre Ward consists of the Senacre estate as a recognised area to the north of Sutton Road and the extensive further development, some already built, but with more to come by 2027 along the Sutton Road. This includes several parts of the southern boundary of Otham. The Sutton Road forms the southern boundary, with the eastern boundary set at the extent of the development of the Urban area.

Park Wood – 2 Members – 6,452 (+6%)

The existing Park Wood ward is the area with the most electoral variance. Consideration was given to creating a three Member ward but the Council feels very strongly that Park Wood is not one homogenous community but has a distinct identity to the east of the industrial park with the new Langley Park development (that sits within Boughton Monchelsea parish). This ward recognises the existing elements that identify as Park Wood to the west of the industrial park.

Langley – 1 Member – 3,205 (+5%)

The land to the east of the industrial park south of Sutton Road, along with further development to come, along the south of Sutton Road extending that built up environment further into Langley. This is proposed as it recognises the distinction with that community from Park Wood and its Langley oriented growth.

Boxley Downs – 2 Members – 6,270 (+3%)

The Council's ward proposal seeks to recognise the rural nature of wards where possible and to minimise the crossing of the M20/A20. Boxley Downs is suggested as a Ward which covers the rural parts of Boxley Parish (the urban part is in Grove Green and Vinters Park) and combines them with communities linked by the A249 heading north and on the North Downs. As an area of outstanding natural beauty the population here is sparse creating a large geographical area, but not one that can be split given the electorate size of Boxley Parish.

Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne – 2 Members – 6,790 (+11%)

To the northeast of the rural area Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne have been combined along with the North Eastern part of the Downs. Again the geographical extent of this ward is in part due to the sparsely populated downs. However, this ward is slightly above the tolerance for electoral equality. Whilst this is not desirable the ward cannot be split without worsening electoral equality and it is necessary to include all the communities on the Downs. In order to keep electoral equality within reason the southern part of Lenham parish has been split and is part of Headcorn ward. This split is a difficult boundary in the sense that it clearly cuts close to Lenham. It is proposed to minimise the impact on electoral integrity and because the railway line forms an easily recognisable boundary. There are developments going in to the south of the railway line as part of Lenham which are not built out yet. It is recognised that this is not ideal but the boundary does not split off existing electors in those properties.

Headcorn – 2 Members – 5,713 (-6%)

Headcorn is too large in its own right to be a single member ward and it is therefore necessary to look further afield to achieve the necessary electorate. In the interests of creating a manageable ward the approach has been to try to keep it geographically sensible and it covers the eastern part of the Borough. Hawkenbury to the west has formed part of the Suttons ward for purposes of electoral equality. The northern boundary has been discussed under Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne ward.

The Suttons – 1 Member - 2,640 (-13%)

The parishes of Chart Sutton, Sutton Valence, and East Sutton have been combined along with the small Hawkenbury community to create a small ward. There is very little growth expected in this part of the Borough and the variance on this ward is slightly outside of tolerance (-13.3%). However, this ward delivers a good size and shape, and its location within the Borough means that issues of a

similar nature will be raised. Convenient and effective local government therefore supports the slightly smaller size.

Otham, Leeds and Kingswood – 1 Member – 2,876 (-6%)

Otham, Leeds and Broomfield and Kingswood are linked by virtue of their rural nature (Otham's more urban parts have been included in urban wards) and their location within the centre of Maidstone Borough. The resulting electoral figure is well within tolerance.

Boughton Monchelsea and Loose – 1 Member – 3,051 (0%)

There is a strong connection between Loose and Boughton Monchelsea in terms of the nature of the communities, issues they face and shared travel connections.

Coxheath and Farleigh – 2 Members – 6,251 (+3%)

Coxheath is a significant urban area in the countryside which is too large on its own for a single member ward. It has been combined with West and East Farleigh to create a convenient ward to the southwest of Maidstone that achieves good electoral equality.

Marden and Yalding – 3 Members – 8,920 (-2%)

Consideration has been given as to whether to split Marden and Yalding into a single member ward consisting of Yalding and Nettlestead, and a two member ward of Marden, Collier Street, Hunton and Linton. Electoral equality can be achieved in either configuration. However, the Council has strong views that Hunton shares more with Yalding than Marden and the split would not allow for that. A three member ward is therefore proposed.

Staplehurst – 2 Members – 5,972 (-2%)

The proposed ward of Staplehurst uses the existing parish of Staplehurst and achieves electoral equality.