

Rutland County Council

Electoral Review

Submission on Warding Patterns

INTRODUCTION

1. The Council presented a Submission on Council Size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on 11 July 2017 following approval at Full Council. On 25 July the LGBCE wrote to the Council advising that it was minded to recommend that 26 County Councillors should be elected to Rutland County Council in future in accordance with the Council's submission.
2. The second stage of the review concerns warding arrangements. The Council size will be used to determine the average (optimum) number of Electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. This number is reached by dividing the electorate by the number of Councillors on the authority. The LGBCE initial consultation on Warding Patterns takes place between 25 July 2017 and 2 October 2017.
3. The Constitution Review Working Group is Cross Party member group. The terms of reference for the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) (Agreed at Annual Council 8 May 2017) provide that the working group will review arrangements, reports and recommendations arising from Boundary and Community Governance reviews. Therefore, the CRWG undertook to develop a proposal on warding patterns which would then be presented to Full Council on 11 September 2017 for approval before submission to the LGBCE.

BACKGROUND

4. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England technical guidance states that an electoral review will be required when there is a notable variance in representation across the authority. A review will be initiated when:
 - more than 30% of a council's wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
 - one or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
 - the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

Rutland has been identified as having poor levels of electoral equality with 5 out of 16 wards having a variance of greater than +/-10%.

5. The LGBCE will consider submissions on warding patterns in light of the following statutory criteria:

- **Electoral Equality** – ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people;
- **Interests and identities of local communities** – electoral arrangements should maintain local ties and boundaries should be easily identifiable;
- **Effective and convenient local government** – new wards or electoral divisions must allow for effective representation by the elected representative(s) and any new arrangements allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

6. Any submission should balance these criteria as far as possible, but where it is not possible to comply in all parts of a proposal, the Commission will use its discretion based on evidence presented in support of any departure from the criteria.

7. Rutland

There are currently 26 councillors for 29,094 electors. The total population in Rutland is currently 37,400¹. Office of National Statistics 2014-based subnational population projections predict that this will increase to 38,964 by 2023. Using population projections, current and historic electorate information and information on planned areas of residential development the number of electors for 2023 has been forecast at 31,604.

Rutland County Council is a unitary Council and as such provides a wide range of services to the community.

Rutland is characterised by two distinct geographical elements:

- Market Towns of Uppingham and Oakham, with higher density residential areas
- Rural villages/Hamlets, some of which are sparsely populated

Rutland Water lies at the centre of Rutland and provides tourism, sport and leisure in the area.

The whole area is parished and contains 54 parishes.

8. The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) held meetings on 18 July 2017 and 2 August 2017 in order to discuss how the Warding Patterns might be changed in order to address the electoral inequalities highlighted above. Several proposals were put forward by Members, Officers and the Group collectively using a variety of methodology including; using Benefice information; consideration of Parish identities and links with neighbouring Parishes; consideration of changing Council Size to 27; and purely mathematical approach to amending ward boundaries to achieve electoral equality.

¹ 2011 Census Data

9. In considering these options it became clear that drawing up warding patterns using the originally proposed number of members (that would be compliant with the statutory criteria set out above) would be difficult to achieve and would almost certainly result in a high degree of change and disruption. Members of CRWG concluded that an increase to 28 Members would result in greater consistency and minimise radical changes to current Warding Patterns. Members of CRWG were also in agreement that a proposal based on 28 Members would be more likely to satisfy the statutory criteria (see below).

10. **Delivering electoral equality where each County Councillor represents roughly the same number of electors across the County**

Using the proposed number of members for the county (28) and the projected electorate in 2023, the average number of electors per member is 1129. The Boundary Commission will consider variance of plus or minus 10%, this leaves a range within tolerance for Rutland of 1016 to 1242 electors per member.

The proposal detailed at Appendix A provides for electoral equality in 16 out of 17 Wards.

Normanton is the only ward where the variance exceeds the LGBCE's criteria being 11% above the average. It is considered that this is acceptable on the grounds that:

- i. The area is not one that is currently identified as having poor levels of electoral inequality;
- ii. The Ward currently has a clear identity, with the Parishes within the Ward working together as Community Groups to tackle issues over which they have a shared interest detailed below:
 - North Luffenham and Edith Weston Parish Councils have worked together to look at the increase of military working dogs and the planning application for additional kennels and also currently over the future of St George's Barracks.
 - Empingham, Edith Weston and Normanton have worked together over issues generated by Rutland Water and access to the Water for pedestrians including the locking of gates by Anglian Water which has forced pedestrians to walk on a busy road. A parish councillor for Empingham represents all the parishes on the Rutland Water Partnership and is an effective link between them.
 - South Luffenham was supportive when North Luffenham pushed for speed reductions on Edith Weston Road/Station Road through to Wireless Hill.
 - Edith Weston and Normanton have worked together on speeding on Normanton Park Road and the Public Enquiry following the proposed re-routing of the Empingham Road by Hanson Cement.
 - In addition the new sports' pavilion at the recreation ground for which South Luffenham PC has planning permission will be a very convenient facility for North Luffenham residents.

- iii. The impact of the closure of St George's Barracks (MOD site located between the Parishes of Edith Weston and North Luffenham) scheduled for 2021 is as yet unknown (The site could be used for residential, commercial and/or amenity) and will remain so for some time. There may be good reason to review the arrangements in the future, but the negative impact of any changes to this ward made would outweigh any potential future benefit, particularly in light of the uncertainty around possible future development.

In Oakham electoral equality has been achieved and the changes proposed are discussed further below. Oakham Councillors felt strongly that Oakham North East, although also on the low side of the tolerance, should remain the same as this area incorporates the High Street of the main Market Town of Oakham. The particular demands of an area with a mixture of both residential properties and a large amount of business premises, along with the added issues that arise at times from the night-time economy imposed an additional burden on the Ward Councillors for this area.

11. Producing a Pattern of wards that, as far as possible, reflects the interests and identities of local communities.

The pattern of wards proposed is built on existing parish council areas and leaves the pattern of Wards in Rutland largely the same except for the following changes which are proposed in order to achieve electoral equality:

- a) A new Ward is created for Barleythorpe, with 2 County Councillors. Barleythorpe would no longer be part of the County Ward of Oakham North West
 - The Parish of Barleythorpe is a rapidly growing area, with the electorate forecast to increase from 946 (2017) to 2082 (2023).
 - A recent community governance review resulted in the creation of a Parish Council for this area. The interim council was formed in April of 2017 and is already an active, community-led organisation, the Parish Council will be elected in 2018.
 - The submissions received during the consultation periods for this community governance review from Barleythorpe residents clearly evidenced a sense of belonging to the Barleythorpe Community and a desire to have some control over local issues and improve community cohesion – it is therefore considered in the interests of the local community to create a separate ward for Barleythorpe.
- b) The Parish of Teigh is added to Whissendine Ward (removed from Cottesmore);
- c) The Parish of Hambleton is added to Martinsthorpe Ward (removed from Exton & Horn);
- d) Minor boundary changes to the Oakham Parish Wards of Oakham North West and Oakham South West in order to achieve electoral equality as detailed on Map A

- Current Oakham Ward Councillors were consulted and felt that redrawing the boundary between ONW and OSW so that it continues along West Road to the junction at Cold Overton Road and then back towards the crossing would not only achieve electoral equality, but also reflected the interests of the local community. There was evidence of the community in this area working together (Traffic calming was one example given of residents working for a common aim in order to improve road safety in the area).
- Although Oakham South West remains on the low side of the tolerance, it is an area where large scale development has been identified as part of the Local Plan.

12. Providing for Effective and Convenient Local Government

The existing warding arrangements in Rutland are working well and have done so for many years. The proposal is based on leaving warding arrangements largely unchanged and those changes that have been proposed have been designed to achieve the minimum possible disruption to local communities so that existing links between communities can be maintained. The main change is the creation of a new ward for Barleythorpe, this is a rapidly expanding area which justifies the allocation of dedicated ward members in order to support the community and Parish Council effectively. There has been careful thought put into the proposal to ensure that members are not over-burdened and equally importantly that communities can be effectively represented.

The projected ratio of electors per members (1129 +/- 10%) is similar to the existing ratio (1119 +/- 10%).

Rutland County Council operates whole-council elections every four years, therefore a mixture of single, two and three member wards provides for effective and convenient local government.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Warding Patterns Electoral Data
- Map 1 – Current Ward Patterns
- Map 2 – Proposed Ward Patterns