

Rochford District Electoral Review

Response to The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Draft Recommendations Published December 2014

Following the Boundary Commission's Draft Recommendations being published, The Council's Member Working Group and Full Council have met to discuss and decide on its consultation response.

The Council is pleased to note that the Boundary Commission has recommended ward patterns and names which are predominantly based on the submissions made by this Council in September 2014, save for changes to Rochford and minor adjustments to Rayleigh. It is for this reason that this consultation response focuses on specific proposals based on any changes made by the Boundary Commission to the Council's original submission on warding patterns, and provides endorsement otherwise. This is set out in the attached table, and for the avoidance of doubt all 13 wards from the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations have been included so that a clear comprehensive position is provided.

Council Size

The Council welcomes the Boundary Commission being minded to recommend that the Council size remains at 39 Councillors, as previously confirmed on 22 July 2014. This has formed the platform from which all workings have since been carried out.

Parishes and Community Identity

The Council is content that Parish Council boundary lines have been used as building blocks for creating the proposed new District wards, which in themselves represent communities and their distinct identities. Wherever possible there is minimal disruption to existing arrangements, but inevitably there have been some splits to Parish wards in order to achieve electoral equality. There are proposed alterations to ward boundaries within Rayleigh (as tabled to explain), which the Council feels are better under the criterion of effective and convenient local government. This, by default, proposes to reduce the number of Rayleigh Town Council wards from 10 to 7 (removing Beech, Deepdene and Picton).

Electoral Equality

The Council acknowledges that excellent levels of electoral equality have been achieved in all wards, none of which are even close to a variance of 10% from the average for Rochford District by 2020 which the Boundary Commission set as a benchmark. Where the Council is making counter-proposals to the Rayleigh wards of Grange, Trinity and Wheatley there are still very good levels of electoral equality maintained so it is satisfied in this respect.

Three-Member Wards Approach

The Council submitted an original argument within its Warding Patterns Submission for a single-Member ward and two-Member ward in the Rochford area under the reasons of effective and convenient local government. However, the Council recognises that as it operates an election by thirds that the Commission has a presumption of three-Member wards except in all but the most exceptional circumstances and has now devised alternative arrangements that keep to this. The Council is therefore inclined to agree with the Boundary Commission's recommendations for the Rochford North and Rochford South wards on this basis.

Ward Names

In order that ward names are distinct and easily identifiable, the Council is proposing alterations to 5 ward names within the Boundary Commission's Draft Recommendations, which are deemed to be improvements. Again, these are tabled to explain.

Conclusion

Rochford District Council is confident that its response addresses the three statutory criteria of; equality of representation, reflecting community interests and identities and providing for convenient & effective local government. It is asked that the Boundary Commission take careful consideration when looking at the Councils proposals and the justifications provided as it is sincerely felt that in each case this further improves the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations.

Proposals to the Boundary Commission's Draft Recommendations on New Electoral Arrangements for Rochford District Council

Changes as highlighted in green text and explained in the Details column

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per Cllr	Variance from District average %	Detail
Downhall & Rawreth	3	5,503	1,834	1.1%	<p>Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation to transfer the Victoria Avenue area into the Downhall & Rawreth ward.</p> <p>Realign the South-East boundary so that it is coterminous with the County Division line. This moves the Deepdene Avenue, Hedgehope Avenue and Downhall Close areas into the Downhall & Rawreth ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Deepdene (area K on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detraction from the criterion of effective and convenient local government. Electoral equality is maintained.</p>
Foulness & The Wakerings	3	5,700	1,900	5%	<p>Revert to the original ward name 'Foulness & The Wakerings' as proposed by this Council within its Warding Patterns Submission dated September 2014, in order to better identify the area and acknowledging both Little and Great Wakering.</p>
Sweyne Park & Grange	3	5,299	1,766	-2.7%	<p>Revert to the original ward name proposed by this Council within its Warding Patterns Submission dated September 2014, in order to better identify the area and acknowledging land marks with the Sweyne Park name (such as Sweyne Park school).</p>

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per Cllr	Variance from District average %	Detail
					Realign the North-East boundary so that it is coterminous with the County Division line. This moves the Deepdene Avenue, Hedgehope Avenue and Downhall Close areas into the Downhall & Rawreth ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Deepdene (area K on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detracton from the criterion of effective and convenient local government. Electoral equality is maintained.
Hawkwell East	3	5,177	1,726	-5%	Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation (as per the original submission from this Council).
Hawkwell West	3	5,310	1,770	-2%	Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation (as per the original submission from this Council).
Hockley West	3	5,235	1,745	-4%	Rename this ward as 'Hockley West' in order to better identify its area and differentiate to its neighbouring ward, which also mentions Hockley.
Hockley East & Ashingdon	3	5,489	1,830	1%	Rename this ward as 'Hockley East & Ashingdon' in order to better identify its area and differentiate to its neighbouring ward, which also mentions Hockley.
Hullbridge	3	5,627	1,876	3%	Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation (as per the original submission from this Council).

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per Cllr	Variance from District average %	Detail
Lodge	3	5,555	1,852	2%	Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation to modify the boundary with its neighbouring Wheatley ward in order to provide for a clearer boundary in the Richmond Drive area.
Rochford Rural	3	5,454	1,818	0%	Accept the Boundary Commission's ward boundary recommendation, which diverts from the Council's original proposal but achieves a uniform pattern of three-Member wards across the District. Rename this ward as 'Rochford Rural' in order to better identify its area and incorporate Stambridge, Canewdon and Paglesham.
Rochford South	3	5,306	1,769	-3%	Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation, which diverts from the Council's original proposal but achieves a uniform pattern of three-Member wards across the District.
Trinity	3	5,672	1,891	4.2%	Revert to the original proposal in the Council's Warding Patterns Submission by realigning the North-West boundary so that it is coterminous with the County Division line. This transfers the Link Road, Beech Avenue and Elm Drive areas into the Wheatley ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Beech (area J on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detraction from the criterion of effective and convenient local government. Whilst the Boundary Commission does mention about direct access concerns in Wheatley, this area is currently divided here in present day arrangements and so avoiding alteration here also provides consistency for the residents.

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per Cllr	Variance from District average %	Detail
					<p>Realign the South-West boundary so that is it coterminous with the County Division line. This transfers Picton Gardens and Picton Close into the Trinity Ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Picton (area N on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detraction from the criterion of effective and convenient local government.</p> <p>Electoral equality is maintained with these proposals.</p>
Wheatley	3	5,465	1,822	0.4%	<p>Accept the Boundary Commission's recommendation to modify the boundary with its neighbouring Lodge ward in order to provide for a clearer boundary in the Richmond Drive area.</p> <p>Revert to the original proposal in the Council's Warding Patterns Submission by realigning the Northern boundary so that is it coterminous with the County Division line. This transfers the Link Road, Beech Avenue and Elm Drive areas into the Wheatley ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Beech (area J on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detraction from the criterion of effective and convenient local government. Whilst the Boundary Commission does mention about direct access concerns into Wheatley, this area is currently divided here in present day arrangements and so avoiding alteration here also provides consistency for the residents.</p>

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per Cllr	Variance from District average %	Detail
					<p>Realign the Eastern boundary so that is it coterminous with the County Division line. This transfers Picton Gardens and Picton Close into the Trinity Ward. The Rayleigh Town Council ward of Picton (area N on the Boundary Commission Map 1) is removed and avoids unnecessary confusion and detraction from the criterion of effective and convenient local government.</p> <p>Electoral equality is maintained with these proposals.</p>