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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 2023/033

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| Committee:- | Council |
| Date:- | 12 th July 2023 |
| Author:- | Martin Hammond, Town clerk |
| Report Title:- | Review of NNC Ward Boundaries |
| Wards Affected:- | All |

1. Purpose of Report

- a) To seek the Council's views on the proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to redraw the NNC wards.
- b) To seek the Council's views on proposals by the LGBCE to redraw the Town Council wards as a consequence.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to consider

- a) if the comments in paras 3.7-3.9 below should be communicated to the Commission in respect of the NNC wards
- b) if the comments in para 4.4 should be communicate to the Commission in respect of the Town Council's wards

3. Information NNC wards

- 3.1. The LGBCE has recently published its proposals for recasting the wards within the whole NNC area. It is seeking views on the proposals by 7th August 2023.

3.2. The proposals as they affect Kettering Town are set out in Appendix A to this report.

3.3. The Council submitted its views on the initial parameters of the review in January 2023, and our original comments are reproduced as Appendix B.

3.4. The BCE is proposing that the total number of councillors for NNC is reduced to 68 (from 78) and that the number of wards is increased to 30, so that there are a mix of 1, 2 or 3 members wards to better reflect differing community identities. In Kettering, the proposals are set out in Appendix A but can be summarised as

- Single member wards for Avondale-Grange, Brambleside and Pipers Hill wards, more or less contiguous with the current KTC wards
- Two member wards for
 - Ise including parts of Wicksteed ward
 - St Peters and St Michaels areas
- A three member ward for Kettering Central, incorporating All Saints, Northfield and William Knibb town wards

In addition to these ten seats, the southern part of the Hanwood Park development, is covered by a three member ward representing Burton Latimer and Barton Seagrave.

3.5. The extent to which the LGBCE proposals acknowledge or reflect the Town Council's comments are set out in the table below

| Town Council Comment | LGBCE proposal | Conclusion |
|--|--|------------|
| The NNC wards should fully align with the Town Council's boundaries | Whilst an improvement on the current arrangement where 6 out of 15 NNC members have wards which span the Town Council's boundaries, the Ise-Barton Seagrave boundary means four members of NNC have a cross boundary ward (Ise and Barton/Burton). | |
| There should be 11 NNC members representing the Town Council's area | The proposal is for 10, with 3 further members having partial coverage but as a minor part of their ward. | |
| There should be a mix of 1, 2 and 3 member wards to reflect community identity and distinct localities | This has been well reflected in the proposals | |



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| <p>The Town Centre should not be “tacked on” to another ward; it has a higher residential population now and the review should start with what relationship the town centre has with surrounding residential areas</p> | <p>The town centre is included within the large Kettering Central ward which runs north and east of it and therefore the review seems to have respected this point.</p> | |
| <p>The area covered by the Headlands neighbourhood Plan should be included within a single ward, not split.</p> | <p>The whole area is within the proposed St Peters and St Michaels area.</p> | |
| <p>The parish boundary was wrongly shown on the original proposal map</p> | <p>This has been corrected and the Ise ward now covers all the area up to the Council’s easternmost boundary.</p> | |
| <p>The review was overly cautious about population growth</p> | <p>This has not been fully reflected in their proposals; the Ise ward is almost certainly going to be larger than that predicted.</p> | |

3.6. The LGBCE asks one question of consultees about the Kettering proposals and highlights another issue on which it seeks views:-

- a) Should St Peters and St Michaels ward be a two member ward, or should it be split into two single member wards? (paras 70-71)
- b) Is the configuration of the Ise ward correct (paras 64-67)

3.7. There is a good argument for St Peters and St Michaels being separate wards – they are separated by the railway line and have distinct identities – with St Peter’s ward having a larger amount of newer housing. It should be possible to devise a boundary which avoids splitting Thurston Drive by using the railway line as the boundary.

3.8. The proposed Ise ward is curious in that it leaves out a good proportion of the Hanwood Park development area, with a boundary which seems to make much less sense than the one the LGBCE rejected as lacking community identity (that is;- running the boundary with Barton Seagrave along Cranford Rd, which is where the parish boundary now is). It also includes areas down Pytchley Rd which have nothing in common with the Ise or Hanwood Park. It might make slightly better sense to reset the Ise-Barton ward boundary along the existing parish boundary line

and as compensation to include some of the Pytchley Rd estates within the Barton and Burton ward and/or preferably if equality if numbers allow - within St Michaels.

- 3.9 The only other observation is that the proposed Kettering central ward is very large and likely to be highly work intensive even for the three councillors it will have. A minor boundary adjustment with Brambleside ward might help both wards – on the one too big and the other a little too small. .

4. Information – Town Council wards

- 4.1. The Commission have also been obliged to look at the knock on effect for town council wards as part of this review, rather than in a separate review, so their proposals have come without pre-warning and lack the opportunity that existed with the NNC ward review to set out some principles and parameters. To some extent this is a function of the rules they have to observe. The expectation is that NNC will in any case carry out a community governance review of parish wards before the May 2025 elections, which means that the Commission's proposals may only be a staging post in arriving at a final decision on town council wards.
- 4.2. The LGBCE proposals are set out in Appendix C to this report, with a map shown at Appendix D. In short, they propose keeping the size of the Council to 20 members, but making the following changes
1. Merging All Saints and Northfield wards and making this a four member ward
 2. Splitting St Michaels and Wicksteed Ward into two, and joining the St Michaels ward to St Peters, creating thereby a four member ward, and setting up a new single member ward for Wicksteed.
 3. Creating a new ward called Hanwood Park in the south eastern part of the Ise ward as a single member ward, although it would be very light on population if created for the 2025 election.
- 4.3. All other wards are unchanged. Two wards (All Saints and St Peters/Michaels) are proposed to have four members each. The two new wards – Wicksteed and Hanwood Park are a consequence of the Commission's proposals for NNC warding.
- 4.4. Given that these proposals have come without prior discussion, and in the absence of any information about population size for the proposed new wards, the following observations are offered -
- a) The proposed St Peter and St Michaels ward is too large and too diverse, with quite different issues and focuses, and should be split in two, using the railway line as the boundary.
 - b) It is not clear why Northfield ward has been abolished, and by doing so it creates an unmanageably large All Saints ward.



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c) The new Hanwood Park ward has no logical boundaries and is a function of the somewhat illogical proposed boundary between Ise and Barton Seagrave, but more critically, it is not clear what its population will be..

4.5. Wider issues about the size of the Council, the right ratio of voters to councillors, the mix of 1, 2 and 3 member wards can be picked up in the NNC community governance review which is intended to happen during 2024.

5. Consultation and Engagement

The Town Council is a consultee

6. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

None

7. Climate change implications

None

8. Policy Implications

Wards- and their boundaries - which make sense to local people and are capable of being properly represented by councillors are essential to the health of local democracy.

Background Papers

LGBCE consultation document

KTC response in January 2023

Email exchange with NNC officers June 2023