



Kettering
TOWN COUNCIL

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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 081

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	18 th January 2023
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town clerk
Report Title:-	Review of ward boundaries, North Northamptonshire Council
Wards Affected:-	All

1. Purpose of Report

To outline the current ward boundary review and seek members' views on a response to the Boundary Commission's consultation

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to agree the draft response set out in Appendix A

3. Information

3.1. A review of NNC's ward boundaries is being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, England. The existing wards are those which applied to Northamptonshire County Council, when they were single member wards, with three unitary councillors elected for each ward as an interim approach pending this review. The review is intended to create new and better wards in time for the next whole council elections in 2025.

3.2. The Commission has determined that there should be 70 councillors for NNC in future (78 now). In drawing up the new wards, the Commission aims to ensure that each councillor

represents roughly the same number of voters. The intention therefore is that each councillor represents 4038 electors (with a margin of +/- 10%) using population projections up to 2028. The review will try to create wards that as far as possible reflect the interests and identities of communities across North Northamptonshire as well as providing for effective and convenient local government. The Commission is minded not to tweak existing boundaries to fit the population numbers, but to start with a fresh piece of paper.

3.3. The Commission would like to hear opinions on:

- the number of wards
- the names of wards
- where the boundaries between wards should lie
- the number of councillors for each ward.

3.4. The consultation closes on 6th February 2023. Given the time available and to avoid a protracted discussion about how ward boundaries might be drawn up, it is proposed that the Town Council makes some broad proposals about how the review should be approached. Individual members and political groups may separately respond to the consultation with detailed proposals if they wish.

3.5. Given an assumption of there being 70 unitary councillors, an average ratio of 1-4038 electors and a projected electorate for Kettering by 2028 of 44,000, then Kettering should be represented by 11 NNC councillors in future – it currently has 15, of whom 6 also represent electorates outside the Town Council's boundaries. The projected electorate of 44,000 seems rather low and does not seem to account for the timely delivery of the rest of the urban extension at Hanwood Park, almost of all which will now fall in Kettering parish.

3.6. The parish boundaries being used by the Commission does not accurately show the correct eastern boundary of Kettering Town.

3.7. Appendix 1 below sets out a proposed response to the consultation.

4. Consultation and Engagement

Information about the review is available on the Commission's website :-

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/east-midlands/northamptonshire/northamptonshire>



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You can make an online submission on the Commission's website or send your views by email to reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by post to: Review Officer (North Northamptonshire), LGBCE, PO Box 133, Blyth NE24 9FE

5. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

5.1. There are no immediate implications for the Town Council although once the review is complete, NNC may wish to carry out a community governance review of wards at parish council level, which will be influenced by the outcome of their boundary review.

6. Policy Implications

None directly except as above

Background Papers

Consultation by LGBCE and information emails from NNC

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION,
ENGLAND - REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

Introduction

Kettering Town Council was created in 2021, as a consequence of local government re-organisation in Northamptonshire, and represents approximately 60,000 residents in the urban area of Kettering, including an area to the east of the town which is being developed as an urban extension.

The Town Council is of course interested in the outcome of this review, not only for its own sake as an instrument of democratic accountability, but because the NNC ward boundaries will provide the framework for any subsequent review of the Town Council's wards in due course.

The Town Council welcomes this review – the old Northamptonshire CC division boundaries were artificial and in many cases far too large to reflect communities of interest. They now cross town and parish boundaries as well as having become outdated by demographic change. The Council welcomes the Commission's objective of taking a fresh view of how wards should be created in preference to tweaking existing wards.

Principles

Alignment

The Town of Kettering is currently represented by 15 councillors, 6 of whom also represent other villages with distinct identities and interests, which have little or nothing in common with those of the urban community of Kettering. Kettering is the largest single settlement within NNC's area and on the basis of the ratio of councillors to electors of 1-4038, should be represented by 11 councillors, whose wards should all fall within the existing boundary of Kettering Town, to ensure that

- a) there is clarity for the community about who represents Kettering on NNC
- b) Councillors are not pulled in different directions trying to represent quite different rural and urban communities

Ward size

The current blanket approach of all wards having three members (which in turn requires ward electorates of 12000+) has the de-merit of creating wards which fit no-one's concept of community – the wards are too large for most of North Northamptonshire's smaller communities and towns, and become artificial when applied to a larger urban area, when

usually main roads are used to divide communities which have more in common than those they are brigaded with.

The Town Council advocates having smaller wards, with a mix of 1, 2 or 3 member wards, in order to better reflect communities of interest. Some of the Town Council's existing wards are of a size which already fit the 1-4038 ratio as a single member or two member ward and in its search for new ward boundaries, the Commission should not overlook the longstanding boundaries within Kettering town which served the former Kettering Borough Council well.

Communities within Kettering

Kettering Town – not unusually for its size – is made up of distinct communities with separate identities. In broad terms, the Ise estate, the Grange and Avondale estates, Brambleside, the area of town west of the railway line and the several housing estates south of the town see themselves as having distinct identities and use local facilities. Hanwood Park will, over time also, no doubt, develop its own identity as community facilities develop there. For this reason, smaller single member wards would make more sense than large multi-member wards.

Areas of denser housing nearer the town centre may warrant larger wards as it is harder to distinguish community boundaries in this older part of town; in addition, the issues needing to be addressed in these older parts of town are likely to be more demanding of member time. Some multi-member wards will make it easier for community needs to be met if more than one councillor is available to share the workload.

The town centre has an increasing residential population and a proliferation of new flats. Often the town centre has been “tacked on” to another wards as a balancing act for equity of electorates. It would be better if this approach was not taken in future – the town centre also has a distinct set of needs and demands, which have intensified as a result of the increasing population, and a review which starts in the town centre and worked its way outwards would be preferable.

Finally, the Town Council has just adopted a Neighbourhood Plan for the Headlands area of town; a recognition in planning terms that this area also has a distinct identity. It is too small an area to be treated as a ward in itself but should not be sub-divided between wards. A map of the area is attached.

Technical matters

The population projection on the Commission's website seems to show an electorate of about 43,000 for the area of the Town Council by 2028. This appears to be over-cautious



Kettering and does not reflect the development pace of the urban extension of Hanwood Park – almost all of the remaining development will fall within Kettering Town area (currently Ise ward of NNC).

Compounding this issue is that the parish boundary of Kettering Town, as shown on the Commission’s website, is inaccurate as it does not show the inclusion of land to the east of town which is the subject of the urban extension. On your map, this is shown as part of Cranford parish still. For reasons set out above, it is important that the right boundaries are used, both for the calculation of ward size and to reflect the objective of the urban extension, which is that it is an integral part of Kettering.