

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject: Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review

Date of Decision: 19th February 2024

Decision Number:

1/2024

Background:

The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGCBE) are currently undertaking a review of the electoral boundaries for the Essex County Council area. They have published their draft recommendations online and are seeking consultation from local representatives and interested parties.

[The proposals related to the Chelmsford City Council area can be viewed on their website.](#)

Chelmsford City Council intend to submit the following response in support of the comments submitted by the Chelmsford Garden Community Council regarding the boundaries that cross the community council area:

Chelmsford City Council broadly support the proposals suggested within this review but would like to support the request submitted by Chelmsford Garden Community Council to retain the whole of the community council within one county division and propose a further, related change.

To accommodate this, we propose moving SBE-Little Waltham and the entire SBF-Belsteads polling districts to the Chelmer division from Broomfield and Writtle and SAC-Great and Little Leighs to Broomfield & Writtle, (where it is on existing boundaries).

Electoral equality

This would increase Broomfield & Writtle to 17620 (11% above average) and reduce Chelmer to 16621 (4% above average). However, it is noted that Chelmsford's largest allocation of new housing in the Local Plan will then all be within the smaller division, Chelmer, which will be best suited to accommodate growth.

Community Identity

Chelmsford Garden Community has stronger ties with Little Waltham than Great and Little Leighs, with some of the area falling under Little Waltham prior to the Community Governance Review (CGR) and children attending schools within Little Waltham.

Great & Little Leighs is currently in Broomfield & Writtle and therefore existing links between the parish and the county councillor would be maintained. The physical links between The Leighs and Boreham are limited to a single, unclassified road, with residents more regularly travelling through or to the Broomfield and Writtle division for facilities.

The River Chelmer, which gives the division its name, runs through the middle of Little Waltham.

Effective and convenient government

Following our CGR we conducted an interim polling district review which abolished Broomfield East polling district and reallocated the electors to Belsteads. Should the proposals be adopted as they are then the area would have to be separated again.

This would require the allocation of a new polling venue, or possibly, two polling stations hosted in one venue with different ballot papers being issued and increased risk of error.

Finally, it is anticipated that when the City Council boundaries are considered that it would be appropriate for a ward to be realigned or a new one created to cover the whole of the Garden Community Council area. It would be more effective for county divisions to acknowledge the same community identity.

It is also noted that the LGBCE specifically asked for comments about adding Margaretting and Stock to the Broomfield & Writtle division.

Margaretting and Writtle do have close ties, Margaretting village is close to the southern edge of Writtle parish and is linked by two roads: (a) Margaretting Road, Writtle becomes Writtle Road, Margaretting at the parish boundary (running north-south), and (b) the A414 also links the two parishes – being Greenbury Way and Three Mile Hill. Margaretting was in the Broomfield & Writtle division until the 2005 review.

We acknowledge that Stock's links to Writtle are not as strong, as the community identity in Stock holds a strong local connection with the Hanningfields. However, we considered that making any changes to your proposals would break existing community ties elsewhere and be too disruptive.

Decision and Reasons for Urgency:

The Chief Executive decided to submit the above response to the LGBCE consultation on the proposed boundaries for the Essex County Council area. This was done on the grounds that the consultation window did not accommodate the matter being taken to Full Council for consideration (28th November to 19th February).

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council and minority group leaders were consulted on this decision.