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To: The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) for England

27<sup>th</sup> July 2017

## **Ward Boundary Review**

### **Submission by East Hampshire Liberal Democrats (EHLibDems)**

#### **Introduction**

1. This is EHLibDems' response to LGBC's invitation to put forward recommendations on future ward sizes. It takes into consideration the recommendations implemented following LGBC's review of ward boundaries in 2000. These set a precedent for single-member wards which, regrettably, was not implemented throughout the whole district at the time.
2. Although we accept EHDC's 2017 electoral figures, we do not believe the forward projections accurately reflect the growth in housing development that is currently being undertaken and should be completed by 2023. We have therefore plotted these developments on our Connect maps based on earlier registers figures provided by EHDC. These have been used forecast the more likely growth in the electorate on completion of these developments and then appropriate adjustments made to ward boundaries.

#### **Views**

3. We are not certain that the policy of retaining the existing 44 seats is sustainable without major restructuring of some ward boundaries. The growth in population in Four Marks and Medstead and current housing developments in Whitehill and Bordon and Liphook would indicate the need for more wards if existing, sustainable communities are to be maintained.
4. Housing constraints in rural communities, particularly those in the National Park, means that they cannot match the population growth in more urban communities. The average ward size therefore needs to be set near the ceiling for these rural communities at about 2,200.
5. Our main concern revolves around the inequality that exists with multi-member wards. We believe it to be undemocratic, as it favours the biggest party at the expense of smaller ones and independent candidates: it discourages participation in local elections. In short, it creates apathy and helps create a one party council, which cannot be good for democracy.
6. Our submission therefore focuses on improving electoral equality through the introduction of single-member wards. We believe that these would:
  - a. Enable all parties to compete equally on a level playing field thereby making it easier for independent candidates to stand.
  - b. Offer a direct and accountable link between the electorate and their councillor.
  - c. Give the community confidence that differing views will be represented fairly on their behalf.
  - d. Encourage more residents to engage in the democratic process rather than leaving them feeling left out and therefore not voting.

## Submission and Supporting Enclosures

7. Since we have focused more on rectifying inequalities we have provided four supporting enclosures, each produced by the local Lib Dem team: Liphook (3-member ward) and the four 2-member wards in: Headley; Liss; Clanfield & Finchdean and Four Marks & Medstead.
8. Enclosure 1 covers Liphook, Headley and Grayshott. It recommends:
  - a. Little change to Grayshott, which has an approved housing development at Applegarth Farm bringing it to above 2,200 electors by 2013.
  - b. Headley be split into two single-member wards: Headley and Headley Down, with the boundary moved more towards Headley Down. This small boundary change will produce two evenly balanced wards of just over 2,200. We would, however, endorse EHDC's recommendation to resolve the Grayshott Laurels in Lindford split ward: Lindford/Headley and placing it all in Lindford
  - c. Liphook be split into three or four single-member wards. This offers an evenly balanced split which take into account housing developments, currently under construction, that are likely to be finished by 2023. It also shows where approved SHLAA sites are located in each ward. In the three single-member ward option it projects an average electorate of 2,620, 17% above the proposed average. We have therefore recommended an alternative four single-ward proposal at just under 2,000 with room for further anticipated growth as the SHLAA sites are developed.
9. Enclosure 2 splits Liss quite easily into two evenly balanced wards taking into account the extra housing proposed in the Liss Neighbourhood Development Plan.
10. Enclosure 3 proposes that with the current housing growth in Clanfield it no longer needs the addition of Finchdean to support its current 2-member ward. It recommends that:
  - a. Finchdean, which has its own parish council, be incorporated with Rowlands Castle in a new ward so that its parish boundary is respected.
  - b. Clanfield is split into two single-member wards giving both over 2,300 electors.
11. Enclosure 4 (to follow) will provide justification for splitting Four Marks and Medstead into two single-member wards with probably the inclusion of one more. The variance in its electorate already exceeds the current average by +30%, and there are several housing developments taking place. Furthermore, both settlements contain numerous approved SHLAA sites. We would therefore recommend that Four Marks and Medstead be split into at least 2-single wards, possibly three in line with the arguments put forward on Liphook in Paragraph 8c above and in Enclosure 1. **[Holiday commitments preclude the inclusion of Enclosure 4 at this time.]**

## Conclusion

12. We firmly believe that, as town councils clearly did when they set the precedent by demanding single-member wards in 2000, the public will endorse these recommendations. Indeed, the Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council did just that last Monday evening. Whilst we have provided maps showing on how the wards could be split, these are purely guides. In making these recommendations we hope to create a closer bond between councillors and their electorate, restore public confidence in local democracy and encourage a wider range of candidates to stand for public office. Only then will people become more involved and vote.

Trevor Maroney  
Vice Chairman  
East Hampshire Liberal Democrats