EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE COLCHESTER (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2015

2015 No. 0000

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1. The Order provides for new district wards and numbers of district councillors for Colchester Borough Council at the district elections in 2016 and thereafter. The Order also provides for new parish wards and numbers of parish councillors at the parish elections in 2016 and thereafter wherever this is necessary because a parish is to be split between new district wards.

3. Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1. None.

4. Legislative context

4.1. The Commission has power under section 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) to make an order giving effect to recommendations contained in a report, prepared under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act, after conducting an electoral review under section 56(1) of that Act. This instrument is being made to give effect to the Commission's recommendations for new electoral arrangements set out in its report prepared following an electoral review of Colchester Borough Council.

5. Territorial extent and application

5.1. This instrument applies to England.

6. European Convention on Human Rights

6.1. As the instrument is subject to the negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

7. Policy background

- What is being done and why

7.1. The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements including the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions for a specific local authority. The Commission began the electoral review of Colchester in March 2014. The Commission decided to conduct the review of Colchester Borough Council as, based on the 2012 electorate figures, 26% of the borough's wards have a variance of more than 10% from the average for the authority. Of these, one ward – Copford & West Stanway – has an electoral variance of -30%.

7.2. An electoral review aims to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county or district councillor is as close to equal as possible, but the recommendations must also have regard to community identities and interests and the need for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every division or ward is as close as possible to the average for the authority, but is happy to show flexibility in moving away from the average based on the evidence provided during the consultation stages of the review. Following a four-stage review process the Commission published its 'Final recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Colchester Borough Council'[1] on 23 March 2015.

7.3. The Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for Colchester Borough Council at the district elections in 2016 as recommended by the Commission. The existing wards of the district will be replaced by 17 new ones. Each of these 17 wards will return three councillors.

7.4. Under section 56 of the 2009 Act, whenever the Commission recommends changes to the electoral arrangements for a district council it must also recommend whether, in consequence of those changes, any changes should be made to the electoral arrangements for any parish council that is within that district. Among other things, under Schedule 2 to that Act, recommendations must ensure that no parish ward is split between new district wards, and under section 56 of that Act, recommendations must be made regarding the number of parish councillors for each parish ward.

7.5. Consequently, in addition to making changes to the electoral arrangements for the district the Order also, where necessary, makes provision with respect to the establishment of new parish wards and sets the number of parish councillors for each of those parish wards.

7.6. The Order does not amend or revoke any legislation.

[1] http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/24787/Colchester-final-recommendations-Final.pdf

8. Consultation outcome

8.1. The Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the review of electoral arrangements from March 2014 until January 2015. There was an initial six-week consultation, during which the Commission asked for proposals on the most appropriate number of councillors for the district. This was followed by a 12-week consultation on the most appropriate ward boundaries for the district. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission published its 'Draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Colchester'[2] on 21 October 2014. Following a further eight-week consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission considered the further evidence received and published its final recommendations.

8.2. During the course of the review, the Commission received 136 representations. The consultations involved political groups, parish councils, local organisations and other interested parties. The Commission consulted on a council size of 51, an increase of nine. This figure was suggested by three political groups on the Council, which it felt would ensure effective and convenient local government.

8.3. The Commission received 24 submissions in response to its consultation on warding patterns including a city-wide scheme from the Council. During the consultation on warding patterns, the Council proposed increasing the council size by a further one councillor, to 61 members, in order to facilitate their preferred warding arrangements. However, the Commission were of the view that a council size of 60 members would ensure effective and convenient local government for Colchester. The Commission based its draft recommendations on aspects of the submissions received.

8.4. The Commission received 24 submissions in response to its consultation on warding patterns including borough-wide schemes from three political groups. The Commission based its draft recommendations on aspects of the submissions received.

8.5. The Commission considered the representations received and considered that sufficient evidence had been received to make modifications to the boundaries proposed between the proposed Highwoods and St Anne's & St John's wards. It also recommended some more minor amendments to ward boundaries in the Mile End, Lexden & Braiswick, Castle, Greenstead, New Town & Christ Church, Wivenhoe, and Shrub End wards. Two ward names were also amended (New Town & Christ Church and Old Heath & The Hythe). While alternative warding patterns were promoted for other parts of the district, the Commission did not consider that persuasive evidence had been received explaining why these alternatives would better reflect the statutory criteria. The Commission therefore confirmed the remainder of its draft recommendations for the district as final.

[2] http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/23709/Colchester-draft-recommendations-FINAL.pdf

8.6. A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report 'Final recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Colchester' which is available at http:// http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/essex/colchester-fer.

9. Guidance

9.1. The Commission does not intend to issue any guidance alongside this instrument. This is not considered necessary as the Order is self-explanatory and gives effect to recommendations following consultation with interested parties as to the changes to electoral arrangements.

9.2. Once the Order has been made, the Commission will publish a press release and distribute to local media advising that new electoral arrangements will be implemented at the next local elections. The press release will also direct interested parties to the Commission's website where the final recommendations will be available in detail.

10. Impact

10.1. No impact assessment has been prepared because no impact on the private sector or the voluntary sector is foreseen.

10.2. The impact on the public sector will be limited to the area for which the Order makes provision. The one-off cost of producing the map referred to by the instrument is to be funded by the Commission. The one-off cost of amending the electoral register to reflect the new district wards and parish wards is to be funded by Colchester Borough Council.

11. Regulating small business

11.1. The Order does not apply to small business.

12. Monitoring and review

12.1. The Commission will have no role in monitoring Colchester Borough Council's implementation of the Colchester (Electoral Changes) Order 2015. The Commission is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of the Council.

12.2. The Order will be reviewed insofar as the Commission continually monitors local authorities in England to identify any that meet its criteria for electoral reviews.

13. Contact

13.1. Marcus Bowell at the Commission (Tel: 0330 500 1250 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can answer any queries regarding the instrument.