EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE SUFFOLK COASTAL (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2014

2014 No.

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 electoral wards and numbers of district councillors for the district of Suffolk Coastal at the district elections in 2015. The Order also provides for new parish wards and numbers of parish councillors at the parish elections in 2015 wherever this is necessary because a parish is to be split between new district electoral 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 that 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 the district of Suffolk Coastal.

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 Suffolk Coastal on 23 April 2013. The Commission decided to carry out the review as, based on the December 2011 electorate figures, 35% of the district's wards had an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average number of electors per councillor for the district and two wards had a variance of more than 40% from the average number of electors per councillor.

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 reflect community identities and interests and ensure that the wards or divisions allow for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every ward or division it recommends varies by no more than 10% from the average, to ensure good levels of electoral equality, but is happy to show flexibility in varying by more than 10% from the average based on the evidence provided to it during the consultation stages of the review. Following a staged review process the Commission published its "Final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal Council" on 22 July 2014.

7.3. The Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for the district of Suffolk Coastal at the district elections in 2015 as recommended by the Commission. The existing wards of the district will be replaced by 26 new ones. Of these, 11 wards will return one councillor, 14 wards will return two councillors and one ward will return three councillors. The Commission evaluated how many wards would have electoral variances of more than 10% to give an overall indication of how its recommendations would improve electoral equality across the authority. The number of electors represented by each councillor is predicted to vary by more than 10% from the average across the district in only one ward by 2019.

7.4. Under section 56 of the 2009 Act, whenever the Commission recommends changes to the electoral arrangements of a district council it must also recommend whether, in consequence of those changes, any changes should be made to the electoral arrangements of 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 electoral 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.

- Consolidation

7.2 The Order does not amend or revoke any legislation.

8. Consultation outcome

8.1 The Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the Commission's review of electoral arrangements from April 2013 until April 2014. There was an initial dialogue with Suffolk Coastal District Council ('the Council'), during which the Commission asked for proposals on the most appropriate number of councillors for the district. There followed a six-week consultation on the proposed council size, after which the Commission sought proposals from the area on appropriate warding arrangements for the district. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission published its "Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal Council"[1] on 12 February 2014. Following a further 12- week consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission considered further evidence received during the consultation and published its final recommendations.

8.2. In total, 155 representations were received during the consultation stages of the review. The Council proposed a council size of 43 members, a reduction of 12 from the current council size. The Council's opposition groups jointly proposed a reduction in council size to 48. A further 35 submissions were received during consultation on council size. The Commission initially considered that the Council's proposals provided a comprehensive rationale for a council size of 43 and that this council size would ensure effective and convenient local government for the district. However, following the Commission's invitation for proposals on warding patterns, the Council indicated that a council size of 42 would provide the basis for a pattern of wards which would better reflect local community identities and interests. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission concluded that a council size of 42 should be recommended.

8.3. Following the consultation on the draft recommendations, some opposition was received to the warding proposals for Aldeburgh, Darsham, Dunwich, Knodishall, Leiston-cum-Sizewell, Middleton, Peasenhall, Sibton, Theberton, Westleton, and Yoxford. The Commission considered a variety of possible options and warding patterns but on the basis of the evidence received, confirmed its draft recommendations for those areas as final. The Commission, having also received objections to the draft recommendations for Bromeswell, Great Bealings, Hasketon, Kesgrave, Little Bealings, Martlesham and Woodbridge, similarly considered evidence submitted and a variety of possible warding patterns before confirming its draft recommendations for those areas as final. Having considered evidence received, the Commission did, however, make amendments to its draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Bredfield, Easton, Felixstowe, Letheringham, Rushmere St Andrew, Playford, Swilland, Tuddenham St Martin, Westerfield and Witnesham. In all other areas the Commission was of the view that the draft recommendations best reflected the statutory criteria and retained these in its final recommendations.

[1] https://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/14746/suffolk-coastal-draft-recommendations-long-report-editor-corrections-2014-02-10.pdf

8.4. A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report "Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal District Council" which is available at http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/suffolk/suffolk-coastal-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 it 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 electoral wards and parish wards is to be funded by Suffolk Coastal Council.

11. Regulating small business

11.1 The Order does not apply to small business.

12. Monitoring & review

12.1 The Commission will have no role in monitoring Suffolk Coastal Council's implementation of the Suffolk Coastal (Electoral Changes) Order 2014. The Commission is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of Suffolk Coastal District 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

Marcus Bowell at the Commission (Tel: 0207 664 8530 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can answer any queries regarding the instrument.