

Item No. 5.2	Classification: Open	Date: 26 May 2011	Meeting Name: Democracy Commission
Report title:		Community Council Neighbourhoods and Boundaries	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Democracy Commission considers the future delineation of Community Council boundaries.
2. That the Democracy Commission considers the potential options for future boundaries as set out in paragraph 11 of this report and identify options to be investigated in more detail.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. On 25 January 2011, cabinet resolved that the Democracy Commission be tasked with phase 2 of their work, focusing on the role and powers of community councils in the context of budgetary savings. The Democracy Commission will report their progress to council assembly in April 2011 and make their final recommendations in December 2011.
4. At the first meeting of the second phase of the Democracy Commission on Friday 11 March, members agreed a workplan. This is the second meeting of the Commission since that meeting and this report sets out considerations regarding the neighbourhood boundaries for Community Council meetings.
5. The purpose of this meeting is to set out the options members may wish to consider for the future delineation of Community Council meetings. Members are asked to consider these options in the light of the need for making savings. While one of the tasks of the review is to consider how financial reductions can be made it is also timely for the Commission to consider how changes to boundaries and enlargement of existing areas may improve the working of Community Councils.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Community Council budget savings

6. The review of community councils is to be undertaken within the context of the recently agreed council budget and the reductions in public expenditure. The task of the Commission will be to make recommendations to cabinet and council which can deliver a reduction of £344,000 in the total costs of community councils to take effect from 1 April 2012.

Therefore the purpose of this report is to provide the commission with relevant information concerning the wards to be included in Community Council areas. The options, which reduce the number of community council areas, will effectively reduce the running costs of community councils in relation to their various functions. The Local Government Act 2000 requires that the population covered in a community council area does not exceed two-fifths of the total area of the authority.

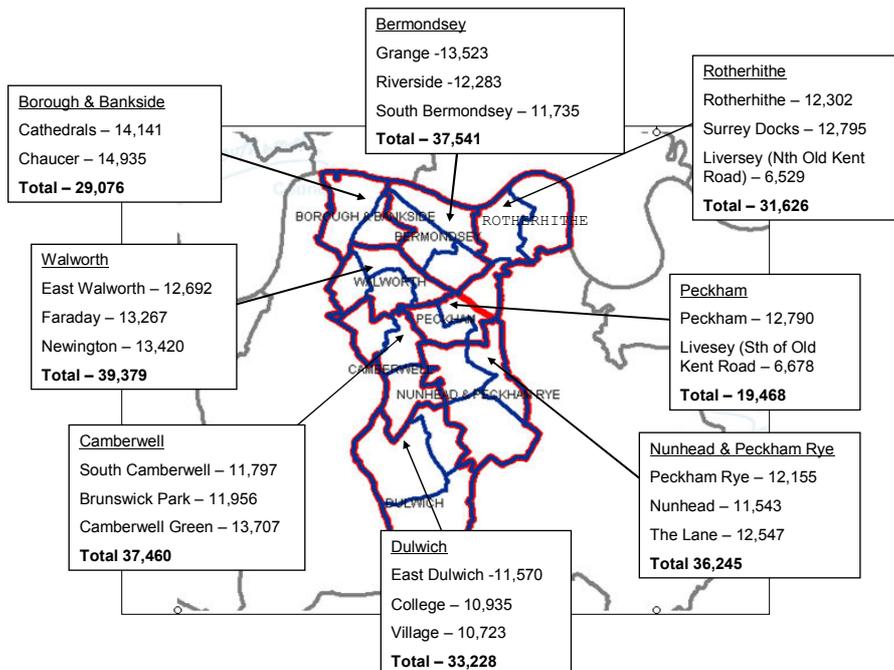
7. At the previous meeting of the Democracy Commission in order to make recommendations for the required budgetary savings the following options were identified:
 - Reduce the number of meetings
 - Reduce the number of community council areas
 - Consider the role and functions
 - Cut down on printing and marketing costs
 - Cut down on community engagement around meetings
 - To stop holding Community Council meetings

8. Members are asked to consider the following suggestions to meet the second of these requirements namely reducing the number of Community Council areas.

9. All of the options are likely to have an impact on meetings. Reducing the number of Community Council areas will impact on the number of agenda items and may well lead to changes in the format of future meetings e.g. introducing more options within meetings for smaller discussions perhaps breaking out into wards

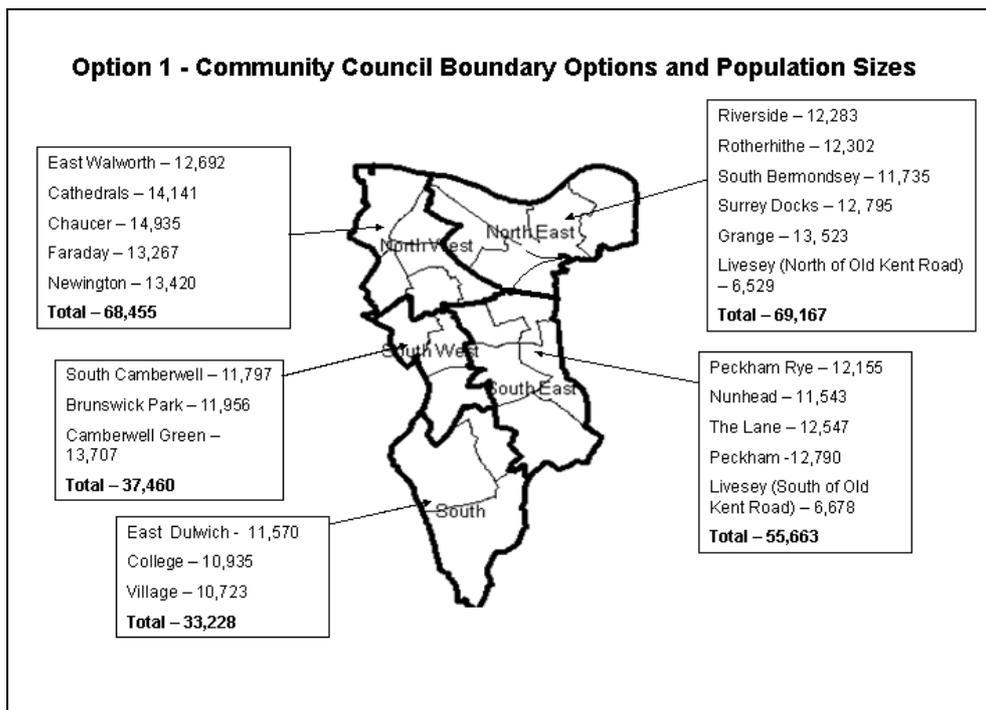
Community Council Boundaries

10. The existing Community Council areas are shown below. There are 8 Community Council areas, with each area taking between 2-3 wards. The exception is Peckham Community Council which covers just 1.5 wards.



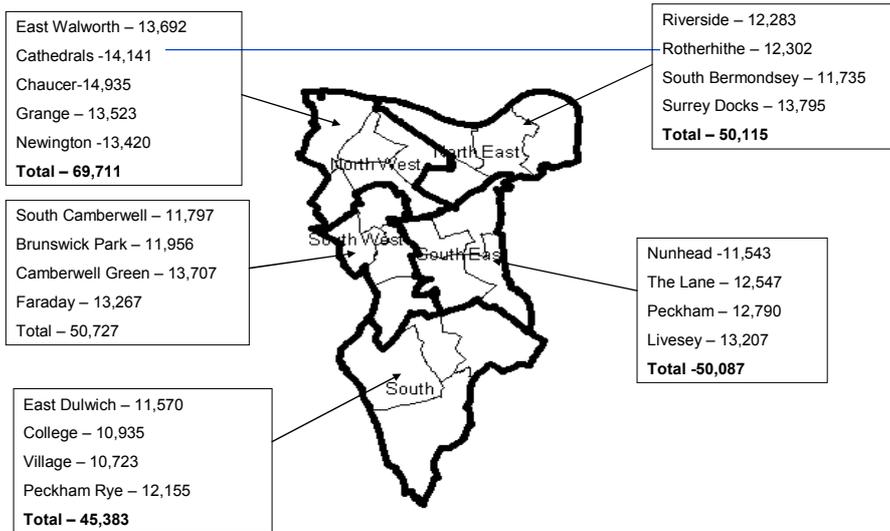
Options

- 11 The following options give a detailed breakdown of what 5 Community Council areas could look like. In presenting these options, officers have been wary of balancing the responsibility to ensure population sizes do not greatly vary from area to area whilst retaining the integrity of traditional neighbourhood boundaries.



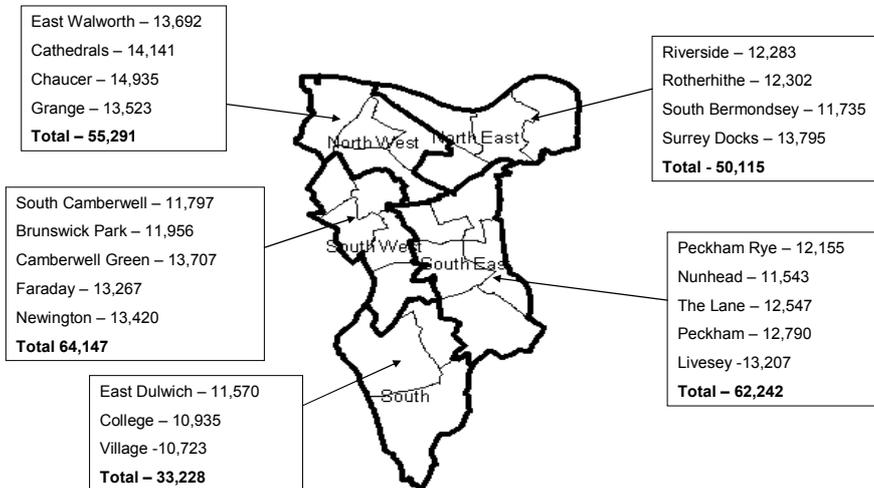
Although there is variation in times of population size, the integrity of traditional neighbourhoods remains with this option.

Option 2 - Community Council Boundary Options and Population Sizes



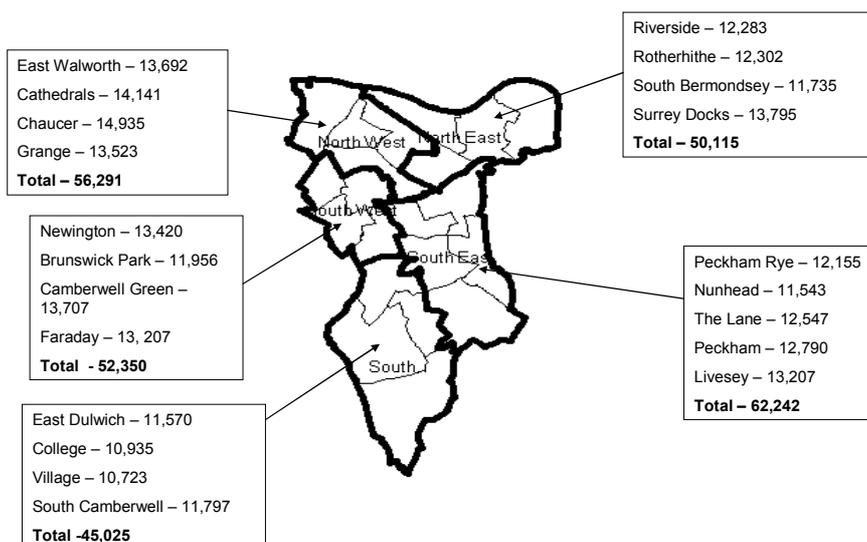
With this option sizes of population are more evenly distributed. However the wards that make up the neighbourhood of Peckham are split between two different Community Council areas.

Option 3 -Community Council Boundary Options and Population Sizes



This third option distributes population even more and subsequently takes away from the traditional neighbourhoods of Walworth and Camberwell by amalgamating them.

Option 4 - Community Council Boundary Options and Population Sizes



This last option moves further towards a more balanced distribution of population sizes whilst impacting on the traditional boundaries of three Community Council areas—Walworth, Camberwell and Dulwich.

Policy Implications

The aim of this report is to allow the Democracy Commission to consider how the Community Councils can operate better and making them more accountable to peoples concerns.

Resource implications

As mentioned in the previous Commission meeting the existing 8 Community Councils have 7 main meetings a year (56 in total). If we were to reduce the number of Community Councils there would then be a subsequent reduction in the number of meetings and an opportunity to save money. For example if the number of Community Council areas were to be reduced to 5 there would be 21 fewer main meetings and savings in terms of running costs (hire of PA equipment, printing of agendas, publicity leaflets) would be identified. All the options assume that planning meetings would be held for each area. The following estimates are based on the figures set out in the information pack.

- Main meetings saving: £96,663 – based on a reduction in meetings of 40%.
- A reduction in the number of Community Council planning meetings for the 5 areas would lead to approximately 24 fewer planning meetings.
- Planning meetings saving: £55,372 – based on a reduction in planning meetings of 40%.

Total meeting cost savings: £152,005 (This does not include reductions in staff costs.)

No additional budget is required for the setting up of the new Community Council boundaries. The savings have been identified in this report and any re-branding of Community Council areas will be met from the existing publicity and marketing budget.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Democracy Commission Phase 2 reports and agenda	Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TZ	Tim Murtagh 020 7525 7187

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	26 may 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	No
Finance Director	No	No
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	19 May 2011	