

TO: **COUNCIL**
11 March 2020

**Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review
Stage 2 Submission**

Chief Executive/Returning Officer – Democratic & Registration Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is reviewing Bracknell Forest Council's electoral arrangements. The new arrangements for the Borough are scheduled to come into effect at the Council elections in May 2023. The Commission's review is undertaken in two stages. The first stage to determine the future Council size was completed on 7 January. The outcome was that the Commission is minded to recommend that 40 councillors should be elected to Bracknell Forest Council in future; two fewer than the current arrangements.
- 1.2 Stage Two of the review will determine a new pattern of electoral wards to accommodate 40 councillors. The Commission has opened a consultation inviting proposals for the new warding pattern. This phase of the consultation closes on 16 March 2020.
- 1.3 The cross-party Boundary Review Working Group appointed by Council on 17 July worked with support from officers to draft a proposed Borough-wide warding pattern. This report seeks Council's approval to the recommended submission.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council agrees the cross-party Boundary Review Working Group proposal on a future warding pattern for Bracknell Forest Council which is appended to this report, for submission to the Commission by 16 March 2020.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To agree a Council submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for the future warding pattern for Bracknell Forest Council.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Working Group considered various warding patterns as part of its deliberations.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 In October 2018 the LGBCE advised that a review of the Council's electoral arrangements would take place. Bracknell Forest boundaries have not been reviewed since 2002. The review is intended to address the unequal levels of electoral equality in Bracknell Forest that have arisen since 2002. The review has two stages; the first determines the future Council size and the second will look at future warding patterns, including:

- The total number of wards
 - Ward boundaries
 - The number of councillors elected to each ward
 - The names of each ward
- 5.2 An initial meeting to agree the review timetable was held on 27 March 2019 with the LGBCE Chairman, the Chief Executive of the Commission, the Leader of the Council, the Returning Officer (Council Chief Executive) and the Head of Democratic & Registration Services. Members were briefed on the process by the LGBCE at the 17 July Council meeting.
- 5.3 Following this briefing a cross-party Member Working Group, chaired by Cllr Dale Birch, was established with the following terms of reference:
- To ensure full Member involvement in, and support to, the electoral review process.
 - To consider options on the future size of the Council i.e. the number of elected councillors, taking into account governance arrangements, scrutiny and regulatory functions and councillors' representational roles; and to formulate draft recommendations on Council size for consideration by Council.
 - To support officers in the provision of information required by the LGBCE and the drafting of the Electoral Review document.
 - To recommend a pattern of wards to Council for submission to the LGBCE that demonstrates how the statutory criteria set by the LGBCE have been met.
- 5.4 Stage One of the review process has been completed and the Commission has advised the Council that it is minded to recommend that 40 councillors should be elected to the Council in future, two fewer than the current arrangements. This was consistent with the Working Group's recommendation that was agreed by Council on 13 November 2019. The attached proposal is based on a Council size of 40.
- 5.5 Stage Two of the review has now commenced. The Commission has opened a consultation on a warding pattern for the Borough which closes on 16 March 2020. During this time anyone can submit a warding pattern.
- 5.6 The Council's Boundary Review Working Group was reconvened to develop and recommend to Council a Borough-wide warding pattern in response to the consultation, that demonstrates how the statutory criteria set by the Commission have been met. The criteria are:
- To deliver electoral equality
 - To reflect community interests and local identities
 - To promote effective and convenient local government
- 5.7 It is important to note that the Commission will accept the proposal that provides the strongest evidence against the statutory criteria. The Working Group's submission is set out in full in the proposal appended to this report. It seeks to balance parity of numbers with natural communities whilst taking into account major 'barriers' such as main roads.
- 5.8 The Commission will publish its draft recommendations in June 2020 and responses can be made until 10 August 2020. The Commission's final recommendations will be published in November 2020. The Order will be laid in Parliament in early 2021 and the new arrangements will take effect from the May 2023 Borough elections.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Stage Two of the electoral review has been undertaken in accordance with the advice and guidance provided by the LGBCE. The remainder of the relevant legal issues are addressed within the report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of this report, however if the Council size is reduced to 40 there will be savings in relation to Members' Basic Allowance and provision of ICT kit. The scale of any savings cannot be quantified until the completion of Stage Two of the review.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 The Council is a consultee to the LGBCE's consultation on a warding pattern for Bracknell Forest.
- 6.4 As part of its consultation the Commission hosted a stakeholder briefing and question and answer session, which the Council facilitated, to explain how the review was being undertaken and how interested parties could submit a proposal. The Commission invited all Parish/Town councillors and clerks to the briefing plus Borough councillors, local community organisations and charities.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 Not required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 There are no strategic risk management issues arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Further information about the electoral review process can be found on the LGBCE website [http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/technical-guidance-2014%20\(reduced\).pdf](http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/technical-guidance-2014%20(reduced).pdf)

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