

To: Council
9 September 2020

**Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review
Response to Draft Recommendations
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 was minded to recommend that 40 councillors should be elected to Bracknell Forest Council in future; two fewer than the current arrangements. This has been increased by one councillor to 41 in subsequent stages.
- 1.2 Stage Two of the review will determine a new pattern of electoral wards to accommodate these councillors. The Commission concluded this stage of the consultation on 16 March and issued draft recommendations for a new pattern of wards on 30 June.
- 1.3 The second consultation stage, based on the draft recommendations commenced on 30 June and will conclude on 7 September. The Commission has agreed that the Council can submit its response after the close of the consultation to accommodate the existing schedule of meetings.
- 1.4 The cross-party Boundary Review Working Group appointed by Council on 17 July 2019 reconvened and worked with officers to draft the proposed response to the Commission. This report seeks Council's approval to submit the recommended response.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council approves the Boundary Review Working Group's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's draft recommendations for new warding arrangements for Bracknell Forest.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To agree a Council response to the Local Government Boundary Commissions draft recommendations for Bracknell Forest.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Working Group considered various options and 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 levels of electoral inequality in Bracknell Forest that have arisen since 2002. The review is comprised of two stages; the first determines the future Council size and the second considers an appropriate pattern of wards, 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 following this the Commission advised the Council that it was, at that point, 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.
- 5.5 The first consultation phase of the Stage Two concluded on 16 March with the Commission publishing their draft recommendations on 30 June. In their draft recommendations the Commission increased the number of councillors from the initially recommended 40 to 41. The Working Group has adjusted its considerations to take account of 41 councillors.
- 5.6 The Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive met with The Local Government Boundary Commissions Lead Commissioner and review manager on 31 July to discuss the Council's response to the draft recommendations and the process the Commission undertook to create the proposed warding pattern.
- 5.7 The Council's Boundary Review Working Group reconvened and developed a Borough-wide response to the draft recommendations which has followed the same principles and statutory criteria of previous stages:

- To deliver electoral equality
- To reflect community interests and local identities
- To promote effective and convenient local government

5.8 As was the process at earlier stages of the review the Commission will adopt the proposal that offers the best solution within the context of the above criteria.

5.9 The Commission will publish its final recommendations on 1 December. 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 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Financial Advice

6.2 There are no material financial implications arising from consideration of this report.

Other Consultation Responses

6.3 The Council is a consultee to the LGBCE's consultation on a warding pattern for Bracknell Forest.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 None required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 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/technicalguidance-2014%20\(reduced\).pdf](http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/technicalguidance-2014%20(reduced).pdf)

Contact for further information

Ann Moore: 01344 352260

Ann.Moore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk