

REPORT TO: FULL COUNCIL

DATE: 28 OCTOBER 2021

TITLE: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE SUPPORT (01279) 446099

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The terms of reference for the Electoral Working Group be approved as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- B** Five Councillors be appointed to the Working Group in accordance with political balance rules.

BACKGROUND

1. The Council currently elects 33 Councillors to eleven different wards. A third of the Councillors (one from each ward) are elected every year. On the fourth year, the Council holds no elections. The County Council's elections take place during the fourth year.
2. The Council has now been approached by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake a periodic review of the Council's electoral arrangements which will complete by 2024 with all-out elections. Since the previous ward boundary review in 2002, the population within the wards has diverged. Some wards have seen significant development. For example the Newhall development in Old Harlow Ward, has seen the number of electors in Old Harlow grow significantly. Other wards have seen comparatively low growth.
3. Ward boundaries are set by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). However it is the responsibility of the local authority to make recommendations to the LGBCE.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

4. The Council is expected to make recommendations to the LGBCE on the following:
 - a) The total number of Members of the Council;
 - b) The number and boundaries of electoral wards for the purposes of the election of Councillors;

- c) The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral division; and
 - d) The name of any electoral area.
5. The Council can also resolve to change its electoral cycle so that all-out elections take place once every four years. The Council can decide to retain its current electoral cycle as well.
 6. Should the local ward boundaries change, there will need to be have all-out elections for the revised ward boundaries regardless of whether the electoral cycle is also changed.
 7. It is recommended that a Working Group is set up to help develop the Council's recommendations to the LGBCE with terms of reference as set out in Appendix A to the report.
 8. The Working Group would be politically balanced with three Conservative and two Labour Councillors

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Community Wellbeing

None specific.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance (Includes HR)

As contained in the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support

Appendices

Appendix A – Terms of Reference for Electoral Review Working Group

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LGBCE – Local Government Boundary Commission for England