

REPORT TO: FULL COUNCIL

DATE: 28 JULY 2022

TITLE: REFERRAL FROM ELECTORAL REVIEW
WORKING GROUP – COUNCIL RESPONSE TO
LGBCE CONSULTATION ON WARDING
PATTERNS

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RECOMMENDED that:

- A** Full Council approves the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) consultation on warding patterns (as attached as Appendix A to the report) and the proposed ward boundaries (attached as Appendix B to the report).

BACKGROUND

1. To comply with the statutory requirement to carry out an electoral review, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has a legal requirement to review all local authorities from time to time. An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements and Harlow was last reviewed 22 years ago. There are two stages to the LGBCE review process; the first being the decision on Council size; and the second being the Warding arrangements.
2. The Council submitted a proposal that the number of Councillors be increased to 36. However, in April 2022, the LGBCE issued the Council a 'minded-to' decision on 26 April 2022, that Harlow should continue to have 33 Councillors
3. The LGBCE is now running a public consultation on warding proposals for Harlow. This consultation, which started May 2022 is now due to run until the 28

July. At this stage, as well as for the initial submission stage, any interested party or individual may submit a proposal in response to the consultation. They have set out three criteria that any proposals should follow. These are that:

- a) Delivering electoral equality for local voters (meaning councillors in each ward should represent approximately the same number of voters);
- b) Ward patterns should, as far as possible, reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable; and
- c) Electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

4. The Working Group has met several times to discuss the Council's response to the LGBCE consultation. The Group discussed several warding patterns and has recommended that the pattern attached as Appendix B to the report be included in the consultation response.
5. It is accepted that no submission will perfectly match the criteria in paragraph 3 above, and that the criteria can conflict with each other. For example, maintaining strong community links may reduce electoral equality. The Working Group considered proposals which contained both 11 and 12 wards. In line with the LGBCE's minded-to decision, the Working Group agreed that an 11 ward proposal should be submitted provided it could sufficiently comply with the criteria.
6. The Working Group recommend the proposal (attached as Appendix B to the report) on the basis that it best reflected the criteria. The reasoning behind each of the wards is set out in the draft response to the consultation (attached as Appendix A to the report).
7. Whilst the Working Group could not agree unanimous support for the submission, the LGBCE consultation is open, and Councillors can submit their own individual or group consultation responses if desired.

Next Steps

8. The LGBCE will consider all responses to the consultation before producing an initial set of ward boundaries, which will be subject to a further consultation in October 2022. The LGBCE will then produce final ward boundaries which the Council will adopt in time for all-out elections in 2024.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance

None specific.

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

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Communities and Environment

None specific.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance and Corporate Services

Any proposed response will need to be submitted by the date of the Council. A further opportunity will be available in the autumn when the LGBCE consult on their final boundary proposals

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed submission to the LGBCE

Appendix B – Draft Wards Map

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LGBCE – Local Government Boundary Commission for England