

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	6 December 2016
Subject:	Boundary Review – Council Size Submission
Report of:	Lin O'Brien, Head of Democratic Services
Corporate Lead:	Sara Freckleton, Borough Solicitor
Lead Member:	R J E Vines
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the Borough's Electoral Wards as eight (36.3%) (based on 2015 electorate) of the 22 Wards have an electoral imbalance in excess of +/-10 with the imbalances ranging from -15 to +27%. The 2016 electorate shows a position of 10 (45.5%) of the 22 Wards having an electoral imbalance of +/- 10% ranging from -17% to +26%.

At its meeting on 14 October 2015, the Executive Committee established a Boundary Review Working Group to ensure the Council was proactive in its response to that review and the document, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, is the Working Group's recommended submission to the review on Council size.

Recommendation:

To APPROVE the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the future size of the Council.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To comply with the requirements of the LGBCE when undertaking a Boundary Review.

Resource Implications:

The financial implications are cost neutral based on a recommendation that the number of Councillors should remain unchanged.

Legal Implications:

The LGBCE was established by Parliament under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Section 56 of the Act requires the LGBCE to review 'from time to time' every principal local authority in England and make recommendations about electoral arrangements (but not their external boundaries). In addition, the LGBCE can, at any time, review the arrangements for all or any part of a principal local authority's area.

The LGBCE can make recommendations for the following aspects of local authority electoral arrangements:

- the total number of Councillors to be elected to the Council (known as ‘Council size’);
- the number and boundaries of Wards/Divisions; and
- the name of any Ward/Division.

Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act sets out the statutory criteria to which the LGBCE is required to have regard in conducting electoral reviews as set out below:

- the need to secure equality of representation;
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

Risk Management Implications:

Not applicable.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The Council size document will be submitted to the LGBCE following Council approval. Once the LGBCE has determined the size there will be a period of 12 weeks to prepare and submit Warding proposals based on this determination. The Boundary Review Working Group will meet regularly to prepare proposals for Council approval within the deadlines.

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 In March 2013, the Council received a letter from the LGBCE concerning a review of the Borough Electoral Wards being included in the Commission’s 2014/15 Work Programme. The matter was referred to the Executive Committee in April and a response was sent to the Commission suggesting that the Council would prefer to be included in the 2015/16 Work Programme which would give the new Council the opportunity to play a major part in the review; allow the position in relation to electoral imbalances to be clearer; assess the impact of Individual Electoral Registration (IER); and allow for more certainty on the impact of current and future development. Any review commencing in 2014/15 would not be completed in time for implementation in 2015 and would therefore not take effect until 2019. In response the Commission initially stated that, although the Council’s comments were considered it had determined that a review of the Council’s electoral arrangements would take place in 2014/15. Subsequently the Commission indicated that, in reviewing its Work Programme and, given that the next available election at which the electoral review could be implemented was 2019, it was reasonable to postpone the start of the review until after the General Election in May 2015.

1.2 In preparation for the review, the Council established a Boundary Review Working Group and the LGBCE held a series of seminars with all Members, Parish and Town Councils and the Working Group.

2.0 COUNCIL SIZE

- 2.1** Council size is the starting point in any electoral review as it determines the average number of electors per Councillor to be achieved across all Wards of the authority. The LGBCE cannot consider the patterns of Wards without knowing the optimum number of electors per Councillor, which is derived from dividing the electorate by the number of Councillors to be elected to the authority.
- 2.2** In determining Council size, the LGBCE require the Council to submit well-reasoned proposals, which demonstrate the individual characteristics and needs of each local authority area and its communities and how its circumstances relate to the number of Councillors elected to the authority. Councils are expected to take the opportunity provided by an electoral review to consider how many Councillors are needed having regard to their political management arrangements, regulatory and scrutiny functions and the representational role of Councillors, both in terms of Ward work and representing the Council on external bodies.
- 2.3** Taking account of these factors the Boundary Review Working Group has produced a draft submission, attached at Appendix 1, for Council approval. Having considered the matter carefully, the Working Group concluded the current number of 38 Councillors was the right number for future representation on the Council.

3.0 TIMETABLE AND NEXT STEPS

- 3.1** The LGBCE will meet on 20 December to consider the Council's submission and will advise informally of its view shortly afterwards but this will be embargoed until 10 January which is the launch date for the invitation of proposals for Warding arrangements. The Council and other interested parties, including political parties, Parish Councils etc. will then have until 20 March 2017 to submit proposals. Following this the LGBCE will consider all the proposals submitted to it and produce draft recommendations for consultation in June 2017 for a period of eight weeks. The outcome of the consultation will then be considered with final recommendations published in October and an Order laid in November 2017. The new Warding arrangements would then take effect for the 2019 Borough and Parish Elections.
- 3.2** Once the Boundary Review Working Group has received an indication from the LGBCE on Council size the Group will commence work on Warding arrangements for consultation with all Members.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1** None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1** The Council's submission was developed with the Boundary Review Working Group and was provided to all Members, the Council's Management Team and the LGBCE for comment.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 5.1** Not applicable.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 6.1** Not applicable.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 The work to date has not involved additional staff resources.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 Executive Committee – 6 June 2012.
Executive committee – 3 April 2013.
Executive Committee – 14 October 2015.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: 1. Council Size Submission Document.