

Report to Governance Committee

1st March 2017

By the Monitoring Officer

DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham
District
Council**

Not Exempt

Electoral Review of Horsham: Draft Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

Executive Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) informed the Council in April 2016 that it would undertake an Electoral Review of the District to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

On 21 July 2016, following Member briefings and two seminars, the Council agreed a submission to the LGBCE, proposing a Council size of 47 councillors from May 2019. On 27 September 2016 the LGBCE wrote to the Council advising that it was commencing its consultation on proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards and that it was minded to recommend that 47 district councillors should be elected to Horsham District Council in future.

On 7 December 2016, following discussions with Members on an area and individual basis and a seminar, the Council approved a submission to the LGBCE on warding arrangements for Horsham District Council from May 2019 and in doing so agreed that the LGBCE be asked to approve a Council size of 48 councillors (an increase in one from that originally proposed).

The LGBCE has now opened its public consultation on its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Horsham District Council with a closing date of 3 April 2017. The draft recommendations propose that 48 district councillors should be elected to Horsham District Council in the future and propose new electoral ward boundaries across the District.

Recommendations

That the Committee considers the LGBCE's proposals and makes recommendations to Council on a proposed response.

Reasons for Recommendations

To encourage the LGBCE as far as possible to adopt the warding arrangements that the Council believes will be right for the authority from May 2019 to provide electoral equality whilst reflecting the interests and identities of local communities and providing for effective and convenient local government.

Background Papers

1. The report to Council on 7 December 2016 titled “Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the Electoral Review Of Horsham: Warding Arrangements for Horsham District Council” and the subsequent minute of Council (Minute No. CO/54).
2. The report of the LGBCE dated February 2017 and titled “Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Horsham District Council” and accompanying maps.

Wards affected: All.

Contact: Lesley Morgan, Democratic Services Manager ext 5123.

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) informed the Council in April 2016 that it would undertake an Electoral Review of the District to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections. The LGBCE set out a timetable whereby the review would be undertaken in two distinct stages. The first stage considered council size and was concluded by the LGBCE in September 2016.
- 1.2 The second stage, currently underway, considers warding arrangements. On 7 December 2016, following discussions with Members on both an area and an individual basis, and an all councillor seminar, the Council approved a submission to the LGBCE on warding arrangements for Horsham District Council from May 2019 and in doing so agreed that the LGBCE be asked to approve a Council size of 48 councillors (an increase in one from that originally proposed).
- 1.3 The LGBCE has now opened its public consultation on its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Horsham District Council with a closing date of 3 April 2017 and this report asks the Committee to consider these proposals and make recommendations to Council on a proposed response.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 This warding arrangement proposal aligns with two objectives of the 2016/19 Corporate Plan:
 - Communities, Support our communities; and
 - Efficiency, Great value services

3 Details

- 3.1 The LGBCE, in drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, must balance its three statutory criteria:
 - To deliver electoral equality where each district councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the district
 - That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities
 - That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government
- 3.2 The LGBCE's draft recommendations propose that 48 district councillors should be elected to Horsham District Council in the future and propose new electoral ward boundaries across the District, resulting in 22 wards comprising two single-councillor wards, 14 two-councillor wards and six three-councillor wards.
- 3.3 The LGBCE's draft recommendations are attached in full as an appendix to this report and the overview map is available on their website at:

https://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/32164/Horsham_D_SO.pdf
(Please note: this file is very large and may take some time to download).

However, in summary, the main points from the draft recommendations are as follows:

- They have accepted that a 48-member warding pattern provides for better overall allocation of councillors across the District
- They have proposed an amendment to the eastern boundary of the Council's proposed Broadbridge Heath ward, crossing the A24 and taking in the Highwood housing development, Farthings Walk, Firs Close and Pines Ridge from the proposed Denne ward (this changes the variance in BBH ward from -13% to 0% in 2022)
- They have amended the Council's proposed Forest ward by removing the area to the south of Brighton Road from Horn Brook to the railway line (this changes the variance from +14% to -1% in 2022)
- They have then added the area removed from the proposed Forest ward to the remainder of the proposed Denne Ward (the western area having been moved to Broadbridge Heath) (this gives a variance of -3% in 2022)
- They have redrawn the boundary between the Council's proposed Southwater North and Shipley & Southwater South wards to include the residential area between Worthing Road, Pond Farm Gill and south of Cedar Drive and Nutham Lane in the Shipley & Southwater South ward (this includes the Lintot Square area) (this changes the variance in Southwater North from +5% to -4% and in Shipley & Southwater South from -9% to +1%)
- They have proposed revised parish electoral arrangements (warding) for North Horsham and Southwater Parish Councils as a result of the proposed District warding arrangements.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider the LGBCE's draft recommendations with a view to recommending a proposed response to an extraordinary meeting of Council in order to meet the consultation deadline of 3 April 2017.

5 Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 All Members of the Council have been advised of the draft recommendations and directed to the LGBCE website for further information:
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/west-sussex/horsham>.
There was neither a requirement nor an expectation that the Council should consult with anyone other than its own Members as the Council is itself a consultee in this process and is not the decision maker.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 No specific course of action is proposed as it is for Members of the Committee to determine their response.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The proposal to increase the number of Members to 48 would require the budget for members' allowances to be increased with effect from 2019/20 to take account of four additional Members claiming the basic allowance.
- 7.2 The technical guidance published by the LGBCE states that the commission does not consider the financial implications that the council size proposal could have when it considers effective and convenient local government.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body established in 2010 by Parliament under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
- 8.3 The LGBCE is responsible for undertaking this review following statutory considerations. This report and methodology follows the guidance provided by the commission.
- 8.4 Electoral reviews are a matter for full Council, which has appointed this Committee to advise it on such reviews amongst other matters.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Electoral review is not a corporate risk. Mitigation of any operational risk is provided by the assurance that the LGBCE is an independent body, created by statute and accountable to Parliament, with a track record of delivering electoral reviews.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 The governance arrangements of the Council provide for Members to offer public assurance and challenge around crime and disorder, human rights and equality and diversity matters.