

**REPORT FOR: Licensing & General
Purposes Committee**

Date of Meeting: 4 October 2018

Subject: **Electoral Review 2018-19
– Local Government Boundary
Commission for England**

Responsible Officer: Hugh Peart – Director of Legal and
Governance Services

Wards affected: All

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix A – Draft Ward Boundary
Proposals (Option 1)
Appendix B – Ward Descriptions for
(Option1)
Appendix C - Draft Ward Boundary
Proposals (Option 2)
Appendix D - Ward Boundary Descriptions
for Option 2 (to follow)

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

In accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is conducting an electoral review of the borough of Harrow. The review has reached the stage of submissions concerning the ward arrangements (number of wards, their boundaries and number of councillors per ward) and this report seeks the Committee's approval to the content of the Council's submission on these matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

- a) approve one of the options set out in the report and appendices to be sent to the LGBCE as the Council's warding arrangements submission as part of the current electoral review of the Borough.
- b) authorise the Director of Legal and Governance Services to make any necessary minor drafting amendments and adjustments to electorate forecast figures to ensure that the Council's submission is accurate.
- c) delegate to the Director of Legal and Governance Services authority to submit proposed ward names to the LGBCE should there be

agreement between the two political groups on the Council on this matter.

- d) instruct the Director of Legal and Governance Services to convene a special meeting of the Committee or to report on the question of ward names to full Council (29 November 2018) should there not be agreement between the two political groups on the Council on this matter.

Section 2 – Report

Background

The LGBCE was established under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Independent of central and local government, and political parties, it is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs, chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Earlier this year, the LGBCE commenced an electoral review of the Borough. The new arrangements will, subject to Parliamentary assent, be implemented from the next whole-council elections in London in May 2022. The LGBCE has a duty to conduct electoral reviews “from time to time”; it has announced that reviews for 25 of the 32 London Boroughs will be conducted over the next eighteen months as these areas have not been reviewed since 1999/2000.

An electoral review is an examination of a council’s electoral arrangements. This covers:

- the total number of members to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards/divisions) for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- the number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
- the name of any electoral area.

The Council currently has 63 councillors and 21 wards, with each ward represented by three councillors. The LGBCE received two submissions in respect of the proposed council size, that is, the total number of councillors for the authority in future; these were submitted by the political groups on the Council. On 24 July 2018, the Commission announced that it was “minded to” recommend that Harrow Council should have 55 councillors, eight fewer than the current number of councillors. The LGBCE have invited proposals for new ward arrangements – number of wards, their boundaries and respective electorate numbers, and number of councillors per ward - based on the recommendation of 55 councillors. The consultation runs to 8th October 2018. The Council has assisted the LGBCE in publicising the consultation locally; any person or organisation is entitled to make a submission to the Commission.

The LGBCE will determine its view on ward arrangements and then will issue draft recommendations on 8 January 2019 when a final public consultation period will open, running to 18 March 2019. Following this, the Commission will meet, most probably in April, to approve its final recommendations which are then referred to Parliament before formal adoption.

Ward Arrangements

The LGBCE have adopted the following criteria to guide their assessment of warding proposals:

Delivering electoral equality for local voters – this means ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of a vote is the same regardless of where a voter lives in the local authority area.

Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.

Promoting effective and convenient local government – this means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

Officers have been engaged in discussions with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition on the ward arrangements; briefings have been given to leading Conservative Group councillors and to a full meeting of the Labour Group.

Submissions on ward arrangements must be based on the new figure of 55 for Council size favoured by the LGBCE, so this means that the previous pattern of 3-councillor wards will have to change. Members have indicated their support for proposals providing for 55 councillors across 23 wards (as compared to the current 21 wards) with a mix of 2-member and 3-member wards.

Appendix A comprises a map of proposed ward boundaries and related schedule of electorate estimate figures (Option 1) which officers have assessed as most closely meeting the criteria adopted by the LGBCE (above). The narrative introduction and explanation of ward boundaries related to this option is provided in Appendix B.

Appendix C comprises a map of proposed ward boundaries and a related schedule of electorate estimate figures (Option 2) which has some minor differences to Option 1 affecting wards in the east of the Borough following discussion with the Labour Group. The Conservative Group were invited to include an option in this report but have not taken this up.

Appendix D will follow and be circulated to Members separately. It will contain the ward boundary descriptions for Option 2.

Following final adoption of the LGBCE recommendations, after their submission to Parliament, the Council will need to carry out a review of its polling districts and polling places.

Ward Names

While the LGBCE has set a deadline of 8 October 2018 for submissions on warding arrangements, it has agreed to accept proposals from the Council for the names of wards up to the end of November 2018. It is intended to consult the political groups on the Council on this matter; should there be agreement between them, the Committee is asked to give authority to the Director of Legal and Governance Services to submit the

proposed names to the Commission on the Council's behalf. Should agreement not be reached, then it is suggested that either a special meeting of the Committee be convened before 30 November 2018 or that the Director of Legal and Governance Services report to the full Council meeting on 29 November 2018 to seek a decision on ward names.

Financial Implications

No funding has been made available from central Government to participate in the review. Therefore, all costs are being met from within the current Council budgets.

Legal Implications

The LGBCE has powers and duties under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This consolidates and amends provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The LGBCE "...may at any time conduct a review of all or any part of the area of a principal council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements for the area of the principal council".

The Council is required to cooperate with the Commission in the conduct of such an electoral review; specifically, it "must, if requested by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to do so, provide the Commission, by such date as it may specify, with any information that it may reasonably require in connection with its functions under this section" (Section 56 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 on the conduct of electoral reviews). As part of the review, the Council and others may make submissions proposing electoral arrangements it considers appropriate.

The LGBCE must have regard to:

- (a) the need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the London borough council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council,
- (b) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and in particular—
 - (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and
 - (ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties, and
- (c) the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

The LGBCE must –

- (a) prepare and publish draft recommendations,
- (b) take such steps as its considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them and of the period within which representations with respect to them may be made, and
- (c) take into consideration any representations madewithin that period.

As soon as practicable after conducting a review, the LGBCE must –

- (a) publish a report stating its recommendations, and

(b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them.

The LGBCE may by order give effect to all or any of its final recommendations. These recommendations are put before Parliament in the form of a draft order. A draft of the instrument is laid before each House of Parliament for a period of forty days and unless either House resolves that the instrument be not made, the order then gives effect to the LGBCE's final recommendations.

Risk Management Implications

The Council's submissions in response to the review are not included on the Directorate or other corporate risk registers. The principal risk in not responding or in making an inadequate submission is that the Council's assessment of the effectiveness of new warding arrangements in terms of the local democratic representation and work of councillors, may not be well reflected in the conclusions reached by the LGBCE and its final recommendations.

Equalities implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) is not required for this report, but one will be undertaken for the polling districts and polling places review.

Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

The electoral arrangements allow residents to engage in the democratic process and contribute to the following Council priorities.

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for families

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dawn Calvert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 24 September 2018		
Name: Hugh Peart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring Officer
Date: 25 September 2018		

Ward Councillors notified:

N/A – affects all wards

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Elaine McEachron, Democratic & Electoral Services Manager
Tel: 020 8424 1097 Email: elaine.mceachron@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: LGBCE guidance on electoral reviews available at www.lgbce.org.uk