

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>20 JULY 2012</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HEREFORDSHIRE: PROPOSALS FOR WARDING ARRANGEMENTS</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b>	<b>CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

## **Wards Affected**

County-wide

## **Purpose**

To consider and approve the proposed submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in respect of council warding arrangements for Herefordshire.

## **Recommendations**

**THAT: the Council**

- (a) adopts the proposals for warding arrangements as set out in the summary of the Submission at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, as presented to Council, which is based on single member ward representation across the whole county;**
- (b) requests the Local Government Boundary Commission to conduct the review so that the recommendations in due course will provide that all wards in the County should be single member electoral areas, and accordingly return one councillor in each case;**
- (c) agrees the proposed names for the proposed wards as indicated in Appendix 1; and**
- (d) authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to complete all necessary detailed information required for the warding submission, in time for the Commission's deadline of 28 August 2012.**

## **Key Points Summary**

- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBC) began a formal electoral review of Herefordshire in March 2012.
- The purpose of the LGBC review is to ensure electoral equality as far as possible. Achieving electoral equality means ensuring that there are an equal number of electorate per local ward councillor for every Council ward in Herefordshire.

- A cross-party Members' Electoral Review Working Group, and a supporting Electoral Review Officers' Project Team, have been meeting regularly to prepare the information and evidence needed for the Council's submissions for each phase of the review.
- The first phase of the review required the Council to indicate its preference on Council size (i.e. the total number of local authority councillors) to the LGBC. This Council agreed on 02 March 2012 that Herefordshire should in future be represented by 54 councillors, and made a detailed Submission on council size to the LGBC on this basis.
- The LGBC confirmed in June that it is currently minded to recommend a council size of 54 councillors, and that proposals for warding arrangements should be based on this number.
- The second phase of the review is now underway. This deals specifically with re-designing the Council's wards to accommodate the new number of 54. The LGBC began its public consultation on this on 20 June 2012, and it will run until 28 August 2012. As part of this, the Council is required to make a submission on its preferred warding patterns, including a preference for either single member wards or multi-member wards, or a combination of the two.
- The Council's submission on warding patterns is based on criteria drawn up by the Electoral Review Working Group, which are attached at Appendix 2 to this report. In turn these criteria are based on the LGBC's technical guidance, which can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/guidance-policy-and-publications/guidance>

## Alternative Options

- 1 Council can approve an alternative option to that proposed if it wishes, but in doing so must provide appropriate evidence that the warding patterns will better serve the communities therein, and enable Councillors to discharge all aspects of their roles and run the Council effectively.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The LGBC will take into account the Council's initial submission on warding patterns together with any other proposals received by 28 August 2012, in order to inform its own decision later in the year.

## Introduction and Background

- 3 The electoral review is necessary because 30% of wards in the county have an electoral variance in excess of 10% from the average figure of electors per councillor in the Authority. In particular, Hollington Ward has a variance of 34%.
- 4 The LGBC has issued technical guidance to help local authorities, organisations and members of the public, and in this it lists three options for reviews. Herefordshire is subject to an Type C review, outlined as follows:

Type C – applicable where the Authority makes a case for a substantial change of number of councillors which normally involves more than three Councillors. In this instance the LGBC conducts an initial formal public consultation on Council size, following which a minded to recommend notice is issued and views/information are sought from the public on warding arrangements and related issues. This then leads to the second stage of

public consultation on the Commission's Draft Recommendations. This review can take between 52 and 62 weeks to complete.

## Key Considerations

5. Appendix 1 to this report shows the proposed warding arrangements for Herefordshire as a whole, and also gives more detail for each of the urban areas, namely Hereford City, Bromyard, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye. The maps have been produced separately to the Council agenda, in A3 colour format, to give the necessary level of detail. They have been produced as a result of extensive research by the Officer Project Team, working alongside the members' Electoral Review Working Group. In particular, the overall county map is recognised as the optimum arrangement to achieve electoral equality in 2018 – the main criteria used by the LGBC. It takes account of population forecasts, based on extant planning permissions where there is a strong likelihood of them being implemented by 2018. The overall aim has also been to keep parishes together in their current arrangements, because they represent recognised communities.
6. The urban wards have been re-modelled following on from the re-modelling of the overall County map. The proposals on the urban maps have aimed to provide an even split of wards, reflecting community identities, and using established boundaries such as housing estates, railway lines, rivers, and footpaths wherever possible, and also road routes in and out of the centre. These wards also sometimes have a mix of urban and rural.
7. The overall mapping proposals have also taken account of community identity and effective working arrangements for members, wherever possible.
8. The maps are accompanied by tables which give a statistical breakdown of the wards, showing the current electorate and the forecast for 2018. They also give an indication of possible ward names, which members are asked to agree today. The name suggestions submitted are based on the following criteria, although Members will note that there are some gaps where suggestions are still required:
  - Where a current ward boundary is the same, or very similar to a proposed ward boundary, the current ward name has been used;
  - For urban wards, the proposed wards have been denoted as the name of the urban area, plus a compass direction; for example "Bromyard East";
  - Where the proposed ward pattern bears little resemblance to a current ward, new names have been suggested, based on historical or traditional information.
9. The cross-party Member Electoral Review Working Group has met on four occasions to consider the issues in detail and to put forward warding proposals for consideration by Council. As part of this process the Working Group received various views about warding proposals for some parts of the County. The proposals in this report reflect the view from the March Council about a preference for single member wards.
10. The LGBC is obliged to consider a request that, in conducting the review, it should make recommendations for a uniform pattern of single member wards across the whole Authority
11. Any organisation, group, political party or individual will also be able to contribute to the review and the LGBC will take into account all information it receives. In all instances, information should be supported by evidence.
12. Due to the mismatch between the LGBC's timetable, and the Council's own programme of

meetings, it has not been possible to consult the parish and town councils about the proposals. However, the submission will be publicised on the Council's own website, and on the LGBC's website, and they have been encouraged to contact the LGBC directly in accordance with the review.

13. The Council is also required to make a draft submission to the LGBC, in the form of a document in a similar format to the one on Council size. Further work needs to be done on this to describe all of the wards in detail, and to present the rationale behind the Council's proposals. Approval is requested to continue this work on the submission after today's Council meeting, in consultation with the Group Leaders, and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission by the LGBC's deadline of 28 August 2012.
14. From September 2012, the LGBC will consider all representations and submissions received, to assist them in drawing up draft recommendations for the future warding arrangements.
15. It is expected that the LGBC will announce their draft recommendations and begin the third stage of formal public consultations in November. This consultation period will cover 10 weeks and conclude by the end of January 2013. The Council and other interested parties will be able to formulate any further views and make submissions on the draft recommendations during this period. The LGBC intends to publish the final recommendations for Herefordshire in the Spring of 2013.
16. Any local authority which elects the whole Council every 4 years may request the LGBC when conducting an electoral review to make recommendations for a uniform pattern of single member wards. In these circumstances, the LGBC is required to have regard to the desirability of securing single member electoral areas. However, this requirement does not override the 3 statutory criteria (electoral equality; community identities; effective and convenient local government), which take precedence in all electoral reviews. The LGBC is not obliged therefore to recommend a pattern of single member wards in these cases. If the LGBC declines a single member wards request it has to give reasons for doing so.

## **Community Impact**

17. It should be noted that any new warding arrangements could have implications on the Council's current localities.

## **Financial Implications**

18. Costs have been incurred in the preparation of the Council's submission which can be met from current budgetary provision and there will be additional costs involved in undertaking any re-warding exercise that will follow the Commission's decision.

## **Legal Implications**

19. The review is being undertaken in accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and the Secretary of State's statutory guidance. The Council has a duty to comply with the review.

## **Risk Management**

20. The need to undertake a re-warding exercise may clash with the organisation of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections and the Annual canvass, which will place considerable strain on existing resources.

## **Consultees**

21. A detailed communication exercise will be undertaken as part of the review.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Maps of proposed warding arrangements (A colour copy is enclosed separately for reference)

Appendix 2 – Criteria used for warding arrangements

## **Background Papers**

None