

MEETING:	COUNCIL
MEETING DATE:	19 JULY 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HEREFORDSHIRE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS
REPORT BY:	HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

1. Classification

Open

2. Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

3. Wards Affected

County-wide

4. Purpose

To note the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's final recommendations for Council size and warding arrangements in Herefordshire.

5. Recommendation

THAT: the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's final recommendations for Council size and warding arrangements, and the timetable for implementation, be noted.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1 There are no alternative options to the electoral review of Herefordshire, and the council is obliged to comply with the recommendations. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has powers to conduct electoral reviews in areas where electoral inequality has been identified, and Herefordshire is one such area. Although the review has included the council's views as one of many consultees, it is entirely independent and separate from the council. The process that has been followed is governed predominantly by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 The LGBCE produced its final recommendations for Herefordshire on 25 March 2013, and every member received a paper copy of the report through the post at that time. It is important that the council formally notes the final recommendations, and that members are kept informed of progress made with the review.

8. Key Considerations

- 8.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) began a formal electoral review of Herefordshire in March 2012. The review was necessary because 30% of wards in the county currently have an electoral variance in excess of 10% from the average figure of electors per councillor in the Authority. Particularly, Hollington ward has a variance of 34%.
- 8.2 The purpose of the LGBC review was to ensure electoral equality as far as possible. Achieving electoral equality means that there are an equal number of electorate per local ward councillor for every Council ward in Herefordshire.
- 8.3 Two working groups were set up to co-ordinate the council's response to the three consultation phases of the review: a politically proportionate members' working group chaired by the Leader, and a team of officers providing technical support. The full council considered each phase of the review and decided on its submissions. At its extraordinary meeting on 4 January 2013, the council agreed its response to the LGBCE's draft recommendations for Herefordshire's council size, warding arrangements and ward names. The LGBCE took this into consideration along with every consultation response that it received from Herefordshire individuals, groups and organisations, when deciding its final recommendations.
- 8.4 The LGBCE's final recommendations were published on 25 March 2013, and in summary, include the following:
- Herefordshire should be represented by 53 councillors instead of the current 58;
 - The 53 councillors should represent single-member wards only; therefore, there will no longer be any wards that are served by more than one councillor. Ward boundary changes will be made to accommodate this, and detailed maps area available on the LGBCE's website (a link is provided at the end of this report);
 - A list of wards names has been chosen. Some of the ward names are based on existing familiar wards, and some are entirely new (the list can be viewed. also via the link at the end of this report).
- 8.5 The LGBCE's final recommendations will be laid before Parliament in October 2013, after the parliamentary recess. The recommendations will be laid for a 40-day period, and will only be subject to a potential change if an MP "prays against" the recommendations during this time. If this does not happen during the period, then the recommendations will become a Final Order by default, after the fortieth day.
- 8.6 Once the recommendations become a Final Order, they will automatically come into force at the next local authority elections, which in Herefordshire's case, are currently scheduled for May 2015.

9. Community Impact

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

10. Equality and Human Rights

- 10.1 The LGBCE's proposals will create more electoral parity throughout the County which should make it easier for residents to know who their elected representatives are.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 Costs have been incurred in the preparation of the Council's submission, which were met from the existing budgetary provision, and there will be additional costs involved in carrying out any re-warding exercise that will follow the Commission's decision. This will also be met from existing budget provision, because no additional support is being made available. .

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 The review was carried out 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.

13. Risk Management

- 13.1 The major risk associated with this review relates to the implementation of the proposed warding pattern, which will need to be done within existing resources and by experienced staff who already have a full workload. Careful project management will need to be introduced to deliver everything in the teams' work plans.

14. Consultees

- 14.1 The LGBCE carried out a detailed county-wide consultation exercise at all three phases of the review.

15. Appendices

- 15.1 None. However, if members wish to view the LGBCE's full report with interactive mapping, it can be found at:
<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/herefordshire/herefordshire-fer>

16. Background Papers

- 16.1 None identified.