

 Regulatory Committee		Agenda Item No. 5
Title		Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Recommendations for the Electoral Arrangements for Warwick District
For further information about this report please contact		Chris Elliott 01926 456000 Chris.elliott@warwickdc.gov.uk
Wards of the District directly affected		All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?		No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		Not applicable
Background Papers		Draft Recommendations and WDC submission
Contrary to the policy framework:		No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:		No
Key Decision?		No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)		No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken		No (If No state why below)
The process is about ensuring electoral equality so there is no further need to undertake an equalities impact assessment.		
Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	05.12.12	Chris Elliott
Head of Service		-
CMT	05.12.12	Andrew Jones; Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	05.12.12	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	05.12.12	Andrew Jones/Graham Leach
Finance		-
Portfolio Holder(s)	05.12.12	Group Leaders and Deputy Leader
Consultation & Community Engagement		
This report has been steered with the benefit of all Group Leaders who in turn have involved their group members. The Boundary Commission itself has consulted a range of local groups including parish and town councils.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the Boundary Commissions draft recommendations concerning the electoral arrangements it proposes for Warwick District and seeks approval for a response. It also seeks approval to instigate a community governance review of parish and town council boundaries after May 2013 once the Boundary Commission has concluded its process.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Council responds to the consultation as set out in paragraph 3.4 of this report.
- 2.2 That the Council undertake a community governance review of all parish and town council boundaries within the District after May 2013, once the Boundary Commission has concluded its process for the District electoral arrangements.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Boundary Commission) is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of such reviews is to decide the number of councillors, and the names, numbers and boundaries of wards for a specific local authority. However, the main aim of a review is to ensure "electoral equality" meaning that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. The Boundary Commission had decided to conduct a review of Warwick District Council's electoral arrangements as 35% of the existing wards had 10% or more or fewer electors per councillor than the district average (based on December 2010 data).
- 3.2 The Boundary Commission has conducted its review and has published its report and recommendations for consultation. This is attached at Appendix 1. Maps showing the proposed ward boundaries as recommended by the Boundary Commission will be on display at the meeting. In the process of devising its report the Council had the opportunity of offering its views which were steered by Group Leaders and aided by the Chief Executive. The Council's submission at that early stage is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The Council's submission sought to retain the existing number of Councillors but that a number of changes needed to be made to wards in order that they better reflect communities and in this respect more but smaller wards would assist greatly. Hence a proposal was devised to try to reach 23 wards each with 2 members. In looking at boundaries, recognition was given to the emerging Local Plan and development proposals and how they might alter communities, but the proposals were not dependent upon them.
- 3.4 The Group Leaders again supported by the Chief Executive have reviewed the Boundary Commission's report and have concluded that the following remarks should be made as this Council's response:
1. The lack of acknowledgment of the council advocating a consistent council wide 2 member ward approach is disappointing;
 2. Nevertheless it is acknowledged that for the most part the Boundary Commission have adopted the Council's approach. The changes that the

Boundary Commission has recommended are accepted with the following points (3 to 8) as this Council's caveats;

3. The Boundary Commission consider whether in making one ward in Kenilworth a 3 member ward there is then merit in retaining the other two existing 3 member wards. Kenilworth Town Council has written to the Chief Executive asking for this option to be considered. That letter is attached at Appendix 3. It is felt that the Boundary Commission needs to evaluate this themselves.
4. The Mallory Drive area of Warwick town should remain part of the proposed Aylesford ward as the physical linkages and sense of community are not with the area to the north as suggested by the Boundary Commission but are stronger with the area to the south and to the east and that this should outweigh the need to balance electoral numbers.
5. Whilst the proposal for the single member Myton ward is accepted it is proposed that its boundaries ought to go to recognisable ones on Europa Way to the east and the Warwick Town Council boundary south of Gallows Hill to the south. This additional area of land currently has few if any electors so should not change any numerical balance but if it is allocated for development in the Local Plan it would better relate to the existing Myton Road area than to the areas to the south of Gallows Hill and to and to the east of Europa Way.
6. The proposed creation of a 3 member ward for Bishop's Tachbrook and Heathcote is objected to most strongly. This proposal will complicate an already complicated community pattern by bringing part of the existing Whitnash ward into an entirely new ward divorcing it from the rest of its community of which it has long been part. Instead it is proposed that the Council's original proposal to create a 2 member ward of Heathcote be reinstated. This would bring together the disparate elements of the Warwick Gates housing estate into one urban electoral constituency. Alongside this, it is proposed that the remainder of the Bishop's Tachbrook parish be incorporated within the Budbrooke ward to create a 3 member ward of the same name. The two do have associations and in particular until 2003 Bishop's Tachbrook and Barford were in the same ward for many years.
7. The proposals for wards at Town Council level in Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and Warwick are objected to. The District has a history of the town council wards in these 3 towns mirroring the district wards. This gives certainty to electors and avoids confusion. It is proposed that the town wards in Leamington, Kenilworth and Warwick are the same as the District wards with the exception in Warwick relating to that part of Warwick Town Council area which falls within the proposed Heathcote ward which this Council would argue also needs a Town Council ward.

3.5 The effect of the Council's counter recommendations on electoral numbers is set out at Appendix 4 and show equality within the reasonable parameters allowed (+/- 10%). Maps showing the boundaries as proposed by the Boundary Commission, but with the Council's suggested amendments from the points above, will also be on display at the meeting.

3.6 The Boundary Commission's work only deals with the boundaries of District Council wards and the review exercise has revealed a number of inconsistencies at parish boundary level. It is proposed therefore, that as the responsibility for the parish/town council boundaries lies with the District Council, that a community governance review is undertaken after May 2013 once the Boundary Commission has reached its conclusions.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

4.1 **Policy Framework** - The report is consistent with the Council's policy framework and has no impact on any of the following:

- Development Plan Documents
- Fit for the Future
- Food Law Enforcement Service Plan
- The plan and strategy which comprise the Housing Investment Programme

4.2 **Fit for the Future** – Similarly, the proposal has no impact on the Council's Fit for the Future programme but will contribute to the vision of making Warwick District a great place to live work and visit as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

5.1 The proposals have no impact on the Council's budgetary framework. The Community Governance Review is unlikely to have much more impact than on staff time.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

6.1 The process is being conducted by an outside body in this case the Boundary Commission so the only option the Council has is the manner of its response, if indeed it wishes to make one. Therefore it is for Members to identify any other options than the ones recommended.