

	Licensing & Regulatory Committee 11 January 2018	Agenda Item No. 3
Title	Local Government Boundary commission for England Review of Warwick District Ward Boundaries	
For further information about this report please contact	Chris Elliott, Chief Executive 01926 456000 or chris.elliott@warwickdcc.gov.uk Graham Leach, Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer 01926 456114 graham.leach@warwickdc.go.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Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?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	Council 16 November 2016 Minute 51 Licensing & Regulatory Committee 31 October 2016 Minute 21 Licensing & Regulatory Committee 20 September 2017 Minute 14 Council 20 September 2017 Minute 42	
Background Papers	Warwick District Council Ward Boundary review, Details of electorate forecasting methodology Electoral review of Warwick District Council - <i>A guide for councillors</i>	

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 Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	03.01.18	Chris Elliott
Head of Service		
CMT	03.01.18	Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	03.01.18	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	03.01.18	Andrew Jones
Finance	03.01.18	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	03.01.18	Michael Coker & Andrew Mobbs

Consultation & Community Engagement	
Councillors Boad, Coker, Heath, Illingworth and Naimo	
Final Decision?	Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The report updates the Committee on the review of the Council's Ward Boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and seeks agreement from the Committee on a proposed warding arrangement for this Council to be put to the LGBCE.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee notes the decision by the LGBCE to set the size of the Council at 44 Councillors.
- 2.2 The Committee notes the decision of the Commission to accept the methodology which projects the Local Government electorate in the District to increase from 109,855 in 2017 to 123,334 in 2023.
- 2.3 The Committee considers the options for warding arrangements as contained in the Appendices to this report and determines from those options what should form the submission from this Council.
- 2.4 The Committee delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee and Group Leaders to produce, agree and submit the formal submission document to the LGBCE.
- 2.5 The Committee asks the Chief Executive to notify Warwickshire County Council and all Parish & Town Council's in Warwick District of the proposed warding arrangements from this Council.

3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 At the request of this Council the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the Ward Boundaries. The review was requested in March 2016 (Appendix 1). The reason for seeking the review was partly because of the rapid growth in the electorate which was causing issues of voter equality but also to restore co-terminosity between Town/Parish Council wards and District Council wards which have been thrown into confusion owing to the impact of the recent review of County Council divisions.
- 3.2 The request for the review was accepted and this Council made a submission that the Council size (number of Councillors) should be 48. However, LGBCE considered all representations received and has set the Council size as 44. This is the final decision.
- 3.3 The LGBCE has now started the public consultation on the warding arrangements and any party, group or individual can make a representation to the LGBCE for proposals on warding patterns. Anyone wishing to do this must do so by 5 February 2018.
- 3.4 The intention from this Council has been to engage with as many parties as possible and to seek agreement to a common approach, from not only this Council but also Parish & Town Councils and Warwickshire County Council. A consensual approach will make for a stronger argument to the LGBCE on the decision it should make.

- 3.5 The size of the electorate growth was taken from 1 September 2017 electoral register and forecast through to 2023. The methodology for growth can be summarised as follows. The increase was based on allowing for development on allocated sites (within the Local Plan) and those sites with planning approval where there would be more than 10 dwellings. The information was based on the Warwick District Council Housing Trajectory 2011-2029 as of 1 June 2017. The new homes being built were allocated an electorate of 1.58 properties each based upon the mean occupancy level per property for electors since May 2011.
- 3.6 Prior to the LGCBE setting the size of the Council, Officers had already undertaken calculations on potential warding arrangements using the County Council Divisions as the base for coterminous boundaries. These calculations were on a Council size of between 42 and 51 and were made available to Group Leaders.
- 3.7 Now that the LGCBE has determined the size of the Council, Officers have been able to provide a proposal for the warding arrangement based on coterminous boundaries for Members consideration. In doing so Officers were also mindful of the statutory criteria for the outcome of a review; which can be summarised as follows:
- ***Delivering electoral equality for local voters*** – this means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
 - ***Interests and identities of local communities*** – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
 - ***Effective and convenient local government*** – this means ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole, including both the council size decision and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.
- 3.8 The initial proposal was revised following feedback and a summary of those proposals is set out at Appendix B, along with a plan illustrating them at Appendix C. It should be noted that in its submission the Council needs to show the transition from current electoral equality (as 1 September 2017) to 2023. The ratio of Councillors to electors as at 1 September 2017 was 2497. This warding pattern has been devised with the aim of trying to achieve electoral equality of 1 Councillor to every 2803 electors by 2023.
- 3.9 These proposals are based on using the WCC Divisional Boundaries for Warwick District Ward Boundaries, to enable both District and Parish/Town Wards to be the same as WCC Divisions and this would also enable the Parliamentary Boundaries to be coterminous as well. It proposes that all the Wards should have three District Councillors each except for Warwick South and Budbrooke & Bishops Tachbrook. Numerically these should each have 4 Councillors but for practical purposes should therefore be divided into two smaller wards each with two Councillors in the case of Budbrooke and Bishop's Tachbrook; and in the case of Warwick South into two wards of a 3 and a 1.

- 3.10 There is also a proposal that the Cubbington & Leek Wootton Division be split into a 2 and a 1 arrangement with the current Radford Semele single Member District Ward being retained. This has the advantage of allowing for the ward to be part of a new Parliamentary Constituency of Rugby and Southam should it be confirmed but will still work even if that happens not to occur. It has the advantage of reducing the geographical scale any Councillor would have to cover if it were left as the current County Division.
- 3.11 The LGBCE would seek to have electoral equality within each Ward of no greater than +/- 10% than the average ratio for all electors and Councillors. The greater concern would be those Wards above 10%, this because those at -10% or greater could allow for future development within them. However the LGBCE have also been clear that exceptions can be made to this so long as robust arguments can be made, for example, maintaining a recognised community or areas where future development (outside the five years) could take place.
- 3.12 In the proposal at Appendix B, the wards of concern were the proposed Budbrooke Ward (+14) and the Cubbington & Leek Wootton ward being (+16). These could be argued as exceptional based on the local circumstances to enable communities to be recognised and remain coterminous with other electoral boundaries. The other exceptional figure would be Leamington Milverton at -15%.
- 3.13 Within the initial proposal the split for Warwick South as a 3 and 1 member ward was recognised as not ideal and views were sought from Groups on this and on the proposals overall.
- 3.14 The Labour Group have proposed an alternative arrangement to dividing the Warwick South Ward of Councillors, this retains the use of coterminous boundaries with WCC and simply provides a sub division of the proposed Warwick South Ward. This is set out at Appendix D along with an appropriate map at Appendix E.
- 3.15 In the tables below, it can be seen that the proposal from the Labour Group provides a greater level of electoral equality at the end of the five years compared to the original proposal.

Initial Proposal:

Warwick South (3)	3	5351	-29	7757	-8
Warwick South (1)	1	2201	-12	2348	-16

Labour Group Proposal

Warwick South (3)	3	4996	-33	7549	-10
Warwick South (1)	1	2256	2	2256	-9

- 3.16 The Conservative Group have undertaken and brought forward the same approach as the initial proposal for the rural areas and Kenilworth but have different proposals for Leamington and Warwick. These proposals are summarised at Appendix F and with respective plans at Appendices G and H.

- 3.17 The proposals from the Conservative Group provide an overall greater level of electoral equality but lose the ability to achieve coterminous boundaries between the Town Council and District wards in Leamington and Warwick which would therefore perpetuate the issue the Council has been trying to resolve through this review.
- 3.18 It should be noted that both the Liberal Democrat Group and Whitnash Residents Association (Independent Group) support the initial proposal.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

FFF Strands		
People	Services	Money
External		
Health, Homes, Communities	Green, Clean, Safe	Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels
Impacts of Proposal		
Achieving warding arrangements that reflect local communities will help assist active and cohesive communities.	None	None
Internal		

Effective Staff	Maintain or Improve Services	Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right behaviours	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve our processes Increase the digital provision of services	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for money
Impacts of Proposal		
Use of coterminous boundaries will help to minimise pressure on staff during elections.	The purpose of the boundary review is to establish electoral arrangements which as far as possible avoid splitting local communities and use easily identifiable boundaries. This will help to avoid voter confusion when voting for more than one Council takes place.	Use of coterminous boundaries will help to minimise the cost of administering elections.

4.2 **Supporting Strategies** – This report does not directly relate to Fit for the Future or supporting proposals.

4.3 **Changes to Existing Policies** – There are no proposed changes to existing policies.

4.4 **Impact Assessments** – Other than ensuring Voter Equality no impact assessments have been undertaken because the proposals must fit within the established national the statutory criteria.

5. Budgetary Framework

5.1 The report does not impact on the Budgetary Framework. However depending on the outcome of the decision by the LGBCE there could be a need for additional resources with the Electoral Services Team to implement the changes and administer the 2019 elections. Due to the specialist knowledge required for this work this would be in the region of £30,000 (including on costs).

6. Risks

- 6.1 There are significant risks associated with this report which the Committee need to be aware of and should take into consideration when making the decision on this item.
- 6.2 Town Council Wards – As a result of the revisions to the WCC Divisional Boundaries a number of very small Town Council wards were created in Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth. This is because the law states that a Town/Parish Council Ward, cannot cross either a District Council Ward or County Divisional Boundary. Concerns were raised by members for these respective areas who sought for them to be amended. The only way to amend these Boundaries by 2019 was by a review of the District Council Ward Boundaries. This also enhances the argument for coterminous boundaries at all levels of Government. Both of these points were key arguments in requesting the review of the District Council wards.
- 6.3 Support from other Councils for the proposals – As requested by this Committee, Officers have kept all Parish/Town Council's aware of the review and have attended meetings of the four Town Council's to explain this Council's approach to the review. It is believed by Officers that the four Town Councils would support a proposal from the District Council to have coterminous boundaries with the WCC Divisions (albeit in each town with the potential of sub dividing some of those areas). It is not known if they would support a move away from this. The LGBCE has said the more people that share a single view, the stronger the argument will be for them to follow this and the harder for an opposing view to be taken forward. If the Council were to move away from this approach it is not known if the Town Councils will support this and this may lead to them making their own different proposals (which would weaken the arguments made by the District Council). In addition Warwickshire County Council has supported the initial proposal from the District Council and it is not known if this support would continue if the proposal changed.
- 6.4 Additional Officer Resources – As outlined in paragraph 5.1 there may be a need for additional resources to within the Electoral Services team if coterminous boundaries was not regained. In addition, Members should aware that there is a skills/knowledge shortage in electoral administration nationally and so is hard to recruit to posts especially on a short term contract during high demand periods (i.e. in the run up to elections), as highlighted in the recent cases in both Plymouth and Newcastle – Under-Lyme. The risk therefore is that even if additional financial resources were allocated it might be difficult to find staff to fill any new post.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 This report sets out the alternative options in the appendices for Members to consider and to decide which one or what mixture of proposals should go forward as this Council's proposed submission to the LGBCE.