Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	**Council**	**Date:**	**25 September 2014**
Subject:	**Boundary Review – Proposed Warding Patterns**		
Report Of:	**Head of Legal and Policy Development**		
Wards Affected:	**All**		
Key Decision:	**No**	**Budget/Policy Framework:**	**No**
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Appendices:	**1. Draft Warding Proposal Map**		
	2. Evidence in support of Warding proposals (to follow)		
	3. Electoral Variance		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to the proposals of the Boundary Review Working Group on warding patterns for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that the draft Warding Proposal map at Appendix 1 and the Evidence in support of Warding proposals at Appendix 2 be approved for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 This report follows on from the Electoral Arrangements report considered by Council on 5 June 2014. By way of reminder, the LGBCE has determined that a review of the electoral arrangements for Gloucester City Council should take place because of significant electoral inequality in the Quedgeley Fieldcourt Ward. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive met with LGBCE representatives in December 2013 to discuss the process and timetable for the review and a cross party Member Working Group (the Boundary Review Working Group (BRWG)) was set up to prepare the necessary proposals for submission to the LGBCE.

3.2 The first part of the LGBCE review process was to address the issue of Council size - that is, the number of Members elected to the Council. On 5 June 2014, Council approved a submission for a Council size of 39 Councillors and this has been provisionally agreed by the Boundary Commission.

3.3 The next part of the process involves consultation by the Boundary Commission inviting the submission of warding proposals for the City. There has been publicity

regarding this issued by the Boundary Commission and the Council has provided information at various locations across the City to draw the consultation to the attention of the public. Warding proposals need to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 29 September 2014.

3.4 In considering warding proposals, the Boundary Commission considers the 3 statutory criteria:

- Electoral equality;
- Community identity;
- Effective and convenient local government.

3.5 Electoral Equality

This criterion reflects a basic democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight across a local authority area. The Boundary Commission considers "electoral variance" (i.e. the % figure by which a ward deviates from the councillor to elector ratio for the authority) and aims to have all wards with electoral variances of no more than 10%. The electoral variance information that was sent to the Boundary Commission as part of the Council size submission is set out at Appendix 3.

3.6 Community identity

The higher the electoral variance being proposed for any ward, the stronger the evidence of community identity needs to be to satisfy the Boundary Commission on the proposal. It's important to ensure that evidence is based in practical examples. Assertions as to community identity are unlikely to carry significant weight. The Commission also recognises that community identity is hard to define and can be subjective.

3.7 Practical examples of how communities interact at the time of the proposals can include:

- Shared community events;
- Shared amenities and facilities;
- Public facilities, such as doctors' surgeries, hospitals, libraries or schools;
- Showing how facilities provide a focus for interaction.

3.8 Effective and convenient local government

For this criterion, the Commission will consider the impact of proposals on councillor workload. It will also aim to ensure that wards are coherent, for example, by having clearly identifiable boundaries or by reflecting transport and communication links.

3.9 The BRWG has met to consider warding proposals and there has been cross-party agreement reached on proposals for the Wards shown at Appendix 1. At the time of writing the report, discussions are ongoing between the political groups and if cross-party consensus is reached on warding proposals for other parts of the City before Council meets on 25 September 2014, an amended plan will be made available to Council. Evidence to satisfy the statutory criteria has been produced for those

Wards where consensus has been reached and this is attached at Appendix 2 (to follow).

3.10 If it is not possible to achieve cross-party agreement for all areas of the City, it is suggested that each political group may wish to make a separate submission on warding proposals for those areas.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 There are no alternative options with regard to the LGBCE review and the Council must implement its recommendations.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The recommendations in the report have been reached via the cross party BRWG and, in the opinion of the Working Group, the warding proposals meet the statutory criteria.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

6.1 The electoral review timetable is detailed below.

Gloucester – Boundary Commission Review Timetable		
Stage	**Date Start**	**Date Finished**
Period for submission of warding patterns	22 July 2014	29 September 2014
LGBCE analysis and deliberation on submissions on warding patterns	September – December 2014	
Consultation on LGBCE draft recommendations for warding patterns	9 December 2014	16 February 2015
LGBCE analysis and deliberation of outcome of consultation on draft recommendations for warding patterns	February 2015 – April 2015	
Final recommendations published by LGBCE	May 2015	
All out elections	May 2016	

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

9.1 The LGBCE is responsible for managing risks related to the completion of the review.

9.2 The Council has an opportunity to influence the warding patterns proposed by the Boundary Commission by preparing and submitting its own proposals. Greater weight is likely to be attached to a submission that has been approved by Council than submissions where no Council consensus has been reached.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

11.1 There are no community safety implications.

Sustainability

11.2 There are no sustainability implications.

Staffing & Trade Union

11.3 An officer has been seconded to a temporary Project Officer post to support the detailed work on the review. Following the completion of all relevant submissions by the Council, the officer will return to their substantive post.

Background Documents:

All background papers are available electronically.

LGBCE guidance on how to propose a pattern of wards.
https://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/10409/proposing-new-wards-guidance.pdf