

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Council	Date:	26 February 2015
Subject:	Boundary Review – Draft Council Submission on Local Government Boundary Commission for England recommendations		
Report Of:	Head of Legal and Policy Development		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Sue Mullins, Head of Legal and Policy Development		
	Email: sue.mullins@gloucester.gov.uk		Tel: 39-6110
Appendices:	1. Draft Submission to LGBCE, including maps showing wards proposed by Boundary Review Working Group		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Access to Information Rule 5 and Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that the report could not be finalised until after the meeting of the Boundary Review Working Group on 23 February 2015.

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to the draft submission prepared by the Boundary Review Working Group on the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for the electoral arrangements for Gloucester.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) Subject to any amendments Council wishes to make, the draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be approved.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Legal and Policy Development, in consultation with Group Leaders, to finalise the Council's submission before it is submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by 16 March 2015.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 This report follows on from the Electoral Arrangements report considered by Council on 5 June 2014 and the Warding proposals considered by Council on 25 September 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 involved 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 were approved by Council on 25 September 2014 and submitted to the Boundary Commission by 29 September 2014.
- 3.4 This final stage of the process involves responding to the Boundary Commission's consultation on its recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Gloucester. 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%.

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 the LGBCE recommendations and there has been substantial cross-party agreement reached on the draft recommendations as shown at Appendix 1. It is equally important for the Council to state which of the draft recommendations it agrees with, giving reasons, as those with which it disagrees, as this will help the Commission reach a decision in the event that it receives other representations presenting a contrary view.

3.10 At the conclusion of the BRWG's deliberations, consensus has been reached in relation to every Ward except Westgate. Evidence to satisfy the statutory criteria has been produced for those Wards where consensus has been reached and this is referred to in the Appendix. In respect of Westgate Ward, it is suggested that each political group may wish to make a separate submission on the warding proposals for that Ward.

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.

5.2 Delegated authority to finalise the Council's submission is sought in order to allow further evidence to be gathered and included to support the Council's proposed view in respect of Quedgeley/Kingsway prior to the submission deadline on 16 March 2015.

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
Consultation on LGBCE draft recommendations for warding patterns	20 January 2015	16 March 2015
LGBCE analysis and deliberation of outcome of consultation on draft recommendations for warding patterns	March 2015 – June 2015	
Final recommendations published by LGBCE	30 June 2015	
All out elections	May 2016	

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the contents of this report. However, if the LGBCE recommendations are approved, there will be a need to include an additional sum within Member allowances and other support budgets to reflect the increase in the number of Councillors from 36 to 39. This will be built into the budget proposed for 2016/17.

(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 commenting on the draft recommendations. 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