

Council Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Managing Director

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Date: 9 February 2022

## **Periodic Electoral Review of Guildford Borough Council: Proposed Response to Draft Recommendations**

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the total number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.

The Council approved its Council Size Submission in December 2020 in which it made a strong case for retaining 48 councillors. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) announced in January 2021 that it was minded to make a recommendation that the Council's future size remains at 48 councillors.

The Council then approved its Warding Patterns Submission in July 2021, which set out the pattern of wards that the Council felt best met the statutory criteria in respect of delivering electoral equality, recognising the interests and identities of local communities, and providing for effective and convenient local government.

On 30 November 2021, the LGBCE published its Draft Recommendations for Guildford and announced a further period of public consultation on those Draft Recommendations, which ends on 7 February 2022<sup>1</sup>. In essence, the Draft Recommendations agreed with the Council's proposed pattern of wards in the parished areas of the borough and in respect of the Merrow, Stoke, Stoughton North and Stoughton South wards within the town. The Draft Recommendations in respect of the Burpham, Christchurch & Holy Trinity, Friary, Onslow, St. Nicolas, and Westborough wards differed from the Council's proposals.

On 14 December 2021, the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group reconvened to consider the Draft Recommendations, and in particular those Draft Recommendations which differed from the Council's own Warding Patterns Submission.

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<sup>1</sup> the LGBCE has permitted the Council to submit its response following this meeting

This report sets out the product of the work of the Electoral Review Working Group in respect of the Council's proposed response to the LGBCE's Draft Recommendations.

The Council's proposed response to the Draft Recommendations reflects the conclusions of the Working Group after taking account of the representations of other councillors.

### **Recommendation to Council**

That the proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Draft Recommendations in respect of the Period Electoral Review of Guildford Borough Council, as drawn up by the Electoral Review Working Group and set out in Appendix 2 to this report, be approved and submitted to the Commission.

#### Reason for Recommendation:

To respond to the LGBCE's invitation to respond to its consultation on its Draft Recommendations in respect of the periodic electoral review of Guildford Borough Council.

**Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an opportunity for the Council to respond formally to the LGBCE's consultation on its Draft Recommendations in respect of the periodic electoral review of Guildford Borough Council.

## **2. Strategic Priorities**

- 2.1 The review will ensure that the Council's size and pattern of wards is appropriate for ensuring that the Council is able to deliver on its corporate priorities and in a manner consistent with the Council's desire to be open and accountable to residents in our decision-making.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the total number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.
- 3.2 The last electoral review of this Council in 1998 established the current Council size of 48 councillors, representing 22 wards, of which 9 were three-member wards, 8 were two-member wards, and 5 were single-member wards. These arrangements came into effect at the Borough Council elections in 2003.
- 3.3 The current review began in 2020. Following the Council's Submission to the LGBCE on council size agreed in December 2020, the Council was notified in January 2021 that the LGBCE was minded to recommend that the Council's size remains at 48. The second stage of the review was the consultation on new ward boundaries to accommodate 48 councillors. It is the LGBCE's responsibility to develop and publish draft recommendations on ward patterns. The LGBCE

invited submissions from the Council and any other interested parties to inform its development of recommendations. In January 2021, the Executive established the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group<sup>2</sup> to draw up the Council's Warding Patterns Submission, which the Council approved at its meeting on 28 July 2021.

#### 4. LGBCE's Draft Recommendations and the Council's Proposed Response

4.1 Following consideration of all submissions regarding warding patterns, the LGBCE published its report and Draft Recommendations on 30 November 2021, which is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. The LGBCE is now consulting on its Draft Recommendations and the deadline for receipt of representations on them is 7 February 2022. The LGBCE is aware that Guildford has its Full Council meeting on 9 February and will accept the Council's submission following the meeting.

4.2 In its Draft Recommendations, the LGBCE has attempted to recognise local identity, physical and identifiable boundaries and administrative convenience, provided that the "electoral equality" principle is secured. The Draft Recommendations provide for a Council size of 48 councillors within a total of 20 wards, two fewer than present, as follows:

- 10 x three-member wards
- 8 x two-member wards
- 2 x single-member wards

4.3 In essence, the Draft Recommendations agreed with the Council's proposed pattern of wards in all the parished areas of the borough and in respect of the proposed Merrow, Stoke, Stoughton North and Stoughton South wards within the town. The Draft Recommendations in respect of the proposed Burpham, Christchurch & Holy Trinity, Friary, Onslow, St. Nicolas, and Westborough wards differed, to varying degrees, from the Council's proposals.

4.4 The cross-party Electoral Review Working Group has met twice recently to consider the Draft Recommendations, and in particular those Draft Recommendations which differed from the Council's own Warding Patterns Submission. Following their meeting on 14 December 2021, the Working Group agreed to consult all councillors regarding the Draft Recommendations and the Working Group's proposed response to them, details of which are set out in **Appendix 2** to this report.

4.5 At its most recent meeting on 11 January 2022, the Working Group considered the feedback from councillors. In summary, the responses were as follows:

Councillor	Response
Cllr Deborah Seabrook	Happy with the working group's recommendations
Cllr John Redpath	Happy with the revised boundary being London Road as it's much clearer. Not happy with "Castle Ward" though and would prefer Holy Trinity Ward as

<sup>2</sup> Comprising Cllrs Rooth (Chairman), Hogger, Manning, Nagaty, and Gunning

Councillor	Response
	the amalgamated parts of Christchurch are a long way from the Castle.
Cllr John Rigg	Agrees with Cllr Redpath.
Cllr Nigel Manning	In response to Cllrs Redpath and Rigg's comments, calling the new ward 'Holy Trinity' or 'Christchurch', may cause a feeling of disenfranchisement from some residents. Having a new name would seem sensible. The name 'Castle' was a name put forward by a Councillor, but it is only a suggestion, as the Castle is within the new ward. Any name is up for consideration at this juncture. We just need to decide on one to go back to the LGBCE.
Cllr Ann McShee	No comments
Cllr Bob McShee	No comments
Cllr Angela Gunning	Labour group agrees with the recommendations.
Cllr Ramsey Nagaty	No further comments from his group, but still feels Shalford and Pilgrims has become a huge and somewhat disparate ward
Cllr Nigel Manning	No comments from his group
Cllr Tony Rooth	No further comments from his group

- 4.6 After consideration of these comments, the Working Group agreed to make no further changes to the proposed response set out in Appendix 2.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The next steps for the LGBCE are to publish its Final Recommendations on 3 May 2022, following which a draft legal order giving effect to the Final Recommendations is laid before both Houses of Parliament, and is then subject to what is called the "draft negative resolution procedure". This means that the LGBCE may only confirm the order after it has been before each House for 40 sitting days. Draft orders can be prayed against in either House. In such an event, a debate on the order may take place. If a debate on a draft order is lost, the order will not be made; there is no provision for Parliament to modify the order. On the assumption that the order is confirmed, the Final Recommendations will be implemented at the next Borough Council Elections in May 2023.
- 5.2 Full details of the review are available on the [LGBCE website](#).

## 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the submission of a response to the Draft Recommendations. The costs associated with the review will be met from within existing budgets.

## 7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The LGBCE operates under the provisions of Part 3 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The process for

carrying out an electoral review is set out in the 2009 Act, together with the various criteria to which the LGBCE must have regard. The Council has a duty to support the LGBCE's work and to provide input to that work.

## **8. Human Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications arising directly from the proposals contained in this report. The final approved changes to ward boundaries will have an impact on the Council's GIS systems, and will require a full polling district/polling place review, which will need to be conducted and completed by December 2022 in preparation for the May 2023 Borough elections.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 9.2 In this regard, the Council must consider whether the decision will or could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief; or people who are pregnant.

- 9.3 It is not considered that an equality impact assessment is necessary for the purpose of responding to the LGBCE's Draft Recommendations in respect of Guildford's electoral arrangements.

## **10. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications**

- 10.1 There are no relevant climate change/sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **11. Summary of Options**

- 11.1 The Council essentially has two options:

### Option 1:

To approve the proposed response to the LGBCE's Draft Recommendations attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

### Option 2:

To approve the response, with amendments.

- 11.2 The Electoral Review Working Group recommends Option 1.

## **12. Background Papers**

Reports to Council:

[8 December 2020: Item 11 \(Council Size Submission\)](#)

[28 July 2021: Item 9 \(Warding Patterns Submission\)](#)

## **13. Appendices**

Appendix 1: New Electoral Arrangements for Guildford Borough Council - Draft Recommendations published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (November 2021)

Appendix 2: Proposed response to the LGBCE's Draft Recommendations as drafted by the Electoral Review Working Group