

Council Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Managing Director

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## **Periodic Electoral Review of Guildford Borough Council: Warding Patterns Submission**

### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out the product of the work of the Electoral Review Working Group in respect of the Council's proposed submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on ward patterns.

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 at its extraordinary meeting held on 17 December 2021 approved a submission on a future council size of 48 councillors to the LGBCE. The LGBCE announced on 19 January 2021 that it was minded to make a recommendation that the Council's future size remains at 48 councillors.

As part of the next process of the Electoral Review, the LGBCE began a consultation on ward patterns for a council size of 48 councillors on 26 January 2021, ending on 2 August 2021.

At its meeting on 5 January 2021, the Executive established a cross-party Electoral Review Working Group to produce a warding patterns submission. The Working Group comprises Councillors Tony Rooth (Chairman), Liz Hogger, Nigel Manning, Ramsey Nagaty, and Angela Gunning. The Working Group has met on eight occasions to produce and refine the warding patterns submission attached as **Appendix 1** to this report, together with the accompanying maps at **Appendix 2**.

An informal briefing of all councillors was held on 7 July 2021 to enable the Working Group to share their initial proposals, including maps showing proposed alterations to ward boundaries and a discussion of the approach taken by the Working Group in arriving at their proposals. All councillors were sent a link to the recording of the briefing, together with a link to view the

various maps, and asked to submit any comments or proposals to the working group for consideration. A number of suggested adjustments to boundaries was suggested and these were investigated further by the Working Group, and have resulted in a modification of the proposed pattern of wards.

### **Recommendation to Council**

That the Warding Patterns Submission, attached at Appendix 1, be approved and presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, together with the accompanying maps at Appendix 2.

#### Reason for Recommendation:

To respond to the LGBCE's invitation to make a Warding Patterns submission as part 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 suggest to the LGBCE a warding patterns proposal for consideration as part of the current electoral review.

## **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 its residents.

## **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.

## **4. Part 1: Council Size**

- 4.1 The first part of the process is the invitation from LGBCE for the Council to make a submission on Council size, that is the total number of councillors to be elected to the Council.
- 4.2 The Council at its extraordinary meeting held on 17 December 2021 approved a submission on a future council size of 48 councillors to the LGBCE. The LGBCE announced on 19 January 2021 that it was minded to make a recommendation that the Council's future size remains at 48 councillors.

## 5. Part 2: Warding Patterns

- 5.1 As part of the next process of the Electoral Review, the LGBCE began a consultation on ward patterns for a council size of 48 councillors on 26 January 2021, ending on 2 August 2021.
- 5.2 At its meeting on 5 January 2021, the Executive established a cross-party Electoral Review Working Group to produce a warding patterns submission. The Working Group comprises Councillors Tony Rooth (Chairman), Liz Hogger, Nigel Manning, Ramsey Nagaty, and Angela Gunning. The Working Group has met on eight occasions to produce and refine the warding patterns submission attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 5.3 An informal briefing of all councillors was held on 7 July 2021 to enable the Working Group to share their initial proposals, including maps showing proposed alterations to ward boundaries and a discussion of the approach taken by the Working Group in arriving at their proposals. All councillors were sent a link to the recording of the briefing, together with a link to view the various maps, and asked to submit any comments or proposals to the working group for consideration. A number of suggested adjustments to boundaries was suggested and these were investigated further by the Working Group and have resulted in a modification of the proposed pattern of wards. Maps showing the boundaries of each ward are attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 5.4 The Working Group has proposed a pattern of 20 wards comprising 9 three-member wards, 10 two-member wards and one single-member ward.
- 5.5 The LGBCE will use responses to the current consultation to draw up draft recommendations for new ward boundaries across our area, which provide the best balance of the statutory criteria within which they must make their decisions. The criteria include three main elements:

- ***Delivering electoral equality for local voters***

This means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of an elector's vote is the same regardless of where they live in the local authority area. Based on the recommended council size of 48, and the forecast electorate for 2026 of 118,225 (based on electorate projections which include the effects of expected housing developments in the Borough up to 2026), the target average electorate per councillor is 2,463. The Commission will allow a variance of up to +/-10% from the target ratio:

Ward	-10%	Target ratio	+10%
1 member	2,217	2,463	2,709
2 member	4,433	4,926	5,419
3 member	6,650	7,389	8,128

- ***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, including both the council size decision and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

#### Parished areas

- 5.6 In the parished areas, the parish boundaries often represent the extent of a community. In fact, the LGBCE often uses parishes as the building blocks of wards. The LGBCE have limited powers in relation to parish councils. They can neither create nor abolish a parish council; nor can they change the external boundary of an existing parish. However, when making recommendations about the electoral arrangements of a principal local authority, the LGBCE can make recommendations about the electoral arrangements of any parish councils that might be directly affected by new district ward boundaries. In effect, this primarily means creating new parish wards or changing the boundaries of existing parish wards.
- 5.7 A review undertaken by the LGBCE can have consequences for parishes and their councils, and the legislation requires them to make recommendations to the effect that:
- every ward of a parish having a parish council must lie wholly within a single ward of the relevant district council; and
  - every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single ward of the district council.

#### Further Public Consultation on Draft Recommendations

- 5.8 After receiving all submissions in respect of the warding patterns consultation, the LGBCE will then hold a further public consultation on their draft recommendations (from 2 November 2021 to 10 January 2022) during which time we will be able to comment on them and, if necessary, propose alternatives. After the close of that consultation, the LGBCE will publish its final recommendations on 29 March 2022, and prepare a draft order giving effect to the recommendations to be laid before Parliament. The changes will be implemented at the next borough council elections in May 2023.

### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the making of this submission. 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). This established the LGBCE in place of the former Boundary Committee of the Electoral Commission.

- 7.2. Under S56(1) of the 2009 Act, the LGBCE must, from time to time, conduct a review of the area of each principal council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements. In this regard, “electoral arrangements” means:
- The total number of Councillors
  - The number and boundaries of electoral areas<sup>1</sup> for the election of Councillors
  - The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral area
  - The name of the electoral area
- 7.3 The legislation does not set out how many councillors each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the LGBCE’s responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority. The LGBCE’s recommendation on council size (the retention of 48 councillors) will not be formalised until their final recommendations are agreed and published at the end of the process. This is because the number of councillors may change marginally (generally  $\pm 1$ ) from the initial recommendation if it is felt that modifying the number of councillors may provide for a pattern of wards that better reflects the three statutory criteria referred to in paragraph 5.4 above.
- 7.4 Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act states that the LGBCE must have regard to any change to the number or distribution of electors that is likely to take place within the five-year period following the making of recommendations by the LGBCE in respect of the review (expected in November 2021). This requirement means that, at the start of the review in 2020 the LGBCE asked us to provide them with six-year forecasts of electorate changes in all polling districts, i.e. up 2026.
- 7.5 A number of councillors have expressed concern that anticipated housing development beyond 2026 is not taken into account by the LGBCE in the review process. However, it is worth pointing out that the Council could request a further review at a point in time after 2026 as further development takes place and electorates increase. The LGBCE itself will also take action by conducting a further review when the electoral variances in representation across a local authority become notable. Their criteria for initiating a review in those circumstances are as follows:
- Where more than 30% of a council’s wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
  - Where one (or more) wards has an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
  - the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

The LGBCE monitor the levels of electoral imbalance across all principal local authorities in England annually, and those that meet the above-mentioned criteria will, at some point, be included in their review programme.

## **8. Human Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications arising directly from the proposals contained in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context an electoral area means a ward

## **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 on the patterns of ward boundaries.

## **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 Warding Patterns Submission attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### Option 2:

To approve the Warding Patterns Submission, with amendments.

11.2 The Electoral Review Working Group recommends Option 1.

## **12. Background Papers**

None

## **13. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Draft Warding Patterns Submission to the Local Government  
Boundary Commission for England

Appendix 2: Maps showing the proposed wards to accompany the Submission