

<b>Report title</b>	Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Review	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance	
<b>Accountable director</b>	David Pattison, Director of Governance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Electoral Services	
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<b>Report to be considered by</b>	Full Council	31 March 2021

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**Recommendation for decision:**

The Governance Committee recommend that Council approve:

1. The proposed approach to responding to the boundary review consultation.
2. One of the three options detailed within the report, for phase two of the electoral review that is currently being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the progress of the Boundary Review and to bring three options forward for decision on how to proceed with submitting proposals to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The electoral review of Wolverhampton by the Local Government Boundary Review for England (LGBCE) began in July 2019 with all out elections planned to take place in May 2022.
- 2.2 The review was triggered because 6 out of 20 wards within the local authority had an elector number variance +/- 10% the average ward elector population.
- 2.3 The last electoral review in Wolverhampton occurred in 2003. Since then, the City's population has grown by nearly 30,000 residents. The wards are being reviewed because the population in some wards has grown more than others and more development is now taking place.
- 2.4 The first part of the review involved the Council submitting its recommendation to the Council size.
- 2.5 In March 2020 the Council submitted its recommendation for the Council Size – arguing that the number of councillors should be maintained at 60 with three councillors per ward. This recommendation was accepted by the LGBCE in April 2020.
- 2.6 The second stage of the review – the consultation on ward boundaries – was due to commence on 12 May 2020. However, due to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19, the electoral review had to be delayed.
- 2.7 The second stage of the review and public consultation instead began on 19 January 2021 with a community briefing held on 14 January, delivered by the LGBCE, on the ward boundary consultation. This consultation period closes on 29 March 2021. The LGBCE has agreed for the Council's submission to be made on 2 April 2021 (following Council on 31 March 2021).
- 2.8 The three statutory criteria that the LGBCE require for submissions are:
  1. Electoral equality – The new pattern of wards should mean that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the authority.
  2. Community – Ward patterns should, as far as possible, reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable.
  3. Effective electoral governance – The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the Council.

- 2.9 It had originally been intended for a cross-party working group to be set up. However, it was later decided by Governance Committee that the Labour Group and the Conservative Group would work on independent proposals with the support of officers working on the review.
- 2.10 Officers provided support to both independent working groups by holding a meeting in November to discuss the review and to provide a toolkit and access to a boundary mapping tool to draw up proposals. Both groups submitted individual proposals to the officers. Each working groups proposals were the shared with the other working group to determine the possibility of assembling a combined cross-party working group to discuss agreeing on ward boundaries. We have now reached the stage where we must decide upon next steps regarding how to proceed with the review.
- 2.11 It is apparent that there is no typical path for a Local Authority to take with responding to the LGBCE consultation. Looking at the LGBCE website, it can be seen that St Helens, St Albans, Bedford and Derbyshire Dales did not submit a council submission. Political groups submitted their own submissions in these reviews. Lambeth council adopted the majority party's submission; whilst other councils such as Greenwich, Stockton On Tees and Barking and Dagenham had both a council submission and political group submissions. Reading and Bracknell Forest set up working groups to produce a council submission.

### **3.0 Options**

- 3.1 The three options for how to progress with the response to the consultation are as follows:

Option 1 - Wolverhampton does not submit a Local Authority submission. The Labour Group and Conservative Group submit their submissions independently.

Option 2 - The Committee votes for which proposal is put forward as the council's submission.

Option 3 - The two working groups' work together to prepare a joint Local Authority submission.

- 3.2 Both the Labour Group and Conservative Group submissions have been attached to this document as appendices. Appendix 3 provides some background information which could be used as context for the Local Authority submission.

### **4.0 Key dates**

- 4.1 The key governance timescales and key dates for the review are presented in the table below.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Draft recommendations taken to Governance Committee	12 March 2021
Take recommendations to Full Council	31 March 2021
Submit recommendations to the LGBCE	2 April 2021 (although public consultation formally closes on 29 March, LGBCE have said they will accept submissions up to 2 April recognising date of Full Council meeting)
LGBCE meet to sign off draft recommendations	15 June 2021
LGBCE publish draft recommendations and launch consultation	28 June 2021
End of consultation period	6 September 2021
LGBCE make final recommendations	19 October 2021
Order laid in Parliament	November 2021
Order made	Winter 2021
Polling district review following ward boundary changes	Winter 2021
Implementation of ward boundaries in all out elections	5 May 2022

## **5.0 Financial implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report. [GE/04032021/F].

## **6.0 Legal implications**

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report. [DP/04032021/B].

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

## **8.0 All other Implications**

8.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

## **9.0 Schedule of background papers**

9.1 12 November 2020 - Electoral Review: update on phase two (warding patterns) - Governance Committee.

9.2 04 March 2020 - Electoral Review: Council Size Submission and Electoral Projections - Full Council.

- 9.3 19 February 2020 - Electoral Review: Council Size Submission and Electoral Projections - Governance Committee.
- 9.4 10 February 2020 - Electoral Review: Draft Council Size Submission and Electoral Forecast - Executive Team.

## **10.0 Appendices**

- 10.1 Appendix 1: Labour Group Proposal.
- 10.2 Appendix 2: Conservative Group Proposal.
- 10.3 Appendix 3: Background Information that could be used if a council submission was submitted