

# Governance and Ethics Committee

25 February 2022

<b>Report title</b>	Local Government Boundary Commission for England report Implementation Plan	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paula Brookfield	
<b>Accountable director</b>	David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer	
<b>Originating service</b>	Electoral Services	
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Election Board	8 February 2022

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## Recommendation for decision:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed timetable for the formal review.

## Recommendation for noting:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is asked to note:

1. The two stages of the polling district and polling place review: preliminary and formal reviews.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline the polling district and polling place review that is required to reflect the new boundaries that will take effect from May 2023.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) published their final recommendations for Wolverhampton ward boundaries on 18 January 2022. This includes changes to 14 wards. The six wards that are staying the same are Blakenhall, Graiseley, Merry Hill, Penn, Tettenhall Regis and Tettenhall Wightwick.
- 2.2 There are also ward name changes proposed for 3 wards. Bilston East will become Bilston South, Ettingshall will become Ettingshall North and Spring Vale will be Ettingshall South and Spring Vale. Please see **Appendix 1** for the full report, **Appendix 2** for a map to show the final recommendations compared to the existing ward arrangements, and **Appendix 3** to show the map showing difference between the LGBCE draft and final recommendations. **Appendix 4** shows the existing polling districts against the final wards, which will act as the starting point for the polling districts that have to be redrawn.
- 2.3 The Order for Wolverhampton's Electoral Review is estimated to be made in early May 2022. Subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will apply for the May 2023 council elections where all 60 councillor seats will be up for election.
- 2.4 A review of polling districts and polling places is required to ensure that polling districts align to the new ward boundaries.
- 2.5 The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area.
- 2.6 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the Representation of the People Act 1983 to require the Council to undertake regular reviews of both polling districts and polling places within its area. The differences between a district, place and station are as follows:
  - A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area (ward in this instance)
  - A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.
  - A polling station is room or area within the polling place where voting takes places. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local

authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer for the particular election must provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allocate the electors to those polling stations in such manner as they think the most convenient.

- 2.7 The purpose of a polling district and polling place review is to ensure that all electors have reasonably practicable facilities for voting and that polling places are reasonably accessible to electors who are disabled.
- 2.8 The Act requires the Council to publish notice of a Polling District and Polling Place review and to consult both the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for Parliamentary elections and persons whom the Council considers have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have disabilities.

### **3.0 Preliminary review**

- 3.1 A local authority should undertake a preliminary review of the current polling districts and polling places with a view to establishing their suitability and identify any potential alternatives where required. This may be done before the start of the specified review period. There is no requirement to change any of the polling districts and polling places if they are suitable, but any 'no change' decision must be fully justified as part of the overall proposals.
- 3.2 The following data and information will be used to assist with the preliminary review:
- Data provided to the LGBCE detailing proposed areas of new development, the approximate number of dwellings and expected population numbers for those areas.
  - Details of current polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for purpose.
  - Presiding Officer/Polling Station Inspector comments from May 2021 and May 2022.
  - Ward profile information including levels of deprivation, ethnicity and disability data.
- 3.3 All ward councillors will be invited to feedback on existing polling district and places arrangements following the May 2022 election to offer information and local knowledge to aid the Acting Returning Officer when considering proposals for both polling districts and polling places.

### **4.0 Formal review process**

- 4.1 In accordance with the [Electoral Commission's guidance](#) on conducting polling district and place reviews, the following steps must be carried out for the formal review:
- Publish a notice of the holding of a review

- Consult the ARO for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- Publish all representations made by an ARO within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority's website.
- Seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the AROs.
- On completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
  - all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review.
  - all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
  - all representations made by any person in connection with the review.
  - the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review.
  - details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review.
  - details of the places where the results of the review have been published.

## 5.0 Proposed review timetable

Activity	Month
Conduct preliminary review inviting feedback from councillors and prepare schedule of polling districts and places for consultation	May - June 2022
Publish a notice of the holding of the review	1 July 2022
Publish ARO representation	1 July 2022
Public consultation period	1 July – 12 August 2022
Analyse responses and prepare recommendations	September 2022
Governance and Ethics Committee to consider representations and make recommendations to Full	October 2022

Council	
Full Council to consider recommendations from Governance and Ethics Committee	November 2022
Amend the electoral software to reflect new polling district and place scheme	November 2022
Publish revised register with new polling districts	1 December 2022

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The consultation will largely take place online or in small groups with relevant stakeholders and will be coordinated utilising existing resources within the Elections team. No additional costs are anticipated to be incurred at this stage. [GE/08022022/B]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 Under the Election legislation the reviews proposed in the report must take place in order to give effect to the changes made by legislation in relation to the ward boundaries for the City Council's area and as such the approach is a lawful one [DP/10022022A].

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 A draft equalities analysis has been undertaken to identify the positive and negative impacts against the key equality themes and solutions identified to mitigate against negative impacts. The analysis is in **Appendix 5**.
- 8.2 Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.
- 8.3 Groups and individuals with expertise in access issues within Wolverhampton will be invited to respond to the ARO's representations during the public consultation phase.

## **9.0 All other Implications**

- 9.1 There are no other implications arising from this report at the current time.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 10.1 Electoral Commission, Reviews of polling districts, polling place and polling stations: [Polling place reviews | Electoral Commission](#)

## **11.0 Appendices**

- 11.1 Appendix 1: LGBCE Final Recommendations Report
- 11.2 Appendix 2: Map of current boundaries and final ward boundaries

- 11.3 Appendix 3: Map of LGBCE draft and final recommendations
- 11.4 Appendix 4: Map of final wards and current polling districts
- 11.5 Appendix 5: Equality Analysis