

**To the Chair and Members of the  
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

**ELECTORAL REVIEW – NEW WARD BOUNDARIES**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. To consider any draft warding proposals prepared by the Cross Party Working Group and make an appropriate recommendation to Full Council.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. It is recommended that the Committee:
  - I. considers any draft warding proposals, developed by the Cross Party Working Group, which will be tabled at the meeting;
  - II. notes any areas of common agreement and any remaining areas where cross party agreement cannot be reached; and
  - III. subject to the agreement of the Committee, submits one or more draft warding proposals for consideration at the Full Council meeting on 30th January 2014.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is carrying out an electoral review of Doncaster. The first part of the review considered the total number of councillors that should be elected to the council in future, and recommended that the current number of 63 be reduced to 54.
4. The LGBCE are now considering new ward boundaries to accommodate the reduced number of councillors. This is to ensure that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters and that local wards reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

**DETAIL**

5. The LGBCE is carrying out a public consultation to gather information on possible new ward boundaries to accommodate the reduced number of 54 Councillors. This consultation ends on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.
6. LGBCE describe this phase of the electoral review in the following terms:-

*“The Commission is carrying out an electoral review of Doncaster to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections. The aim of the review is to recommend ward boundaries that mean each Councillor represents approximately the same number of electors  
..... Our review aims to ensure that each Doncaster Councillor represents roughly the same number of voters that and that ward boundaries reflect roughly the same number of voters and that ward boundaries reflect the interests and identities of local communities.”*

7. This is a key stage in the process and is the opportunity for the Council and other interested bodies/persons to put forward reasoned cases for new boundaries for wards across the area aligned to the reduced number of Councillors. LGBCE is very clear that the greatest weight will attach to submissions that are well argued and backed up by credible evidence. The criteria applied by the LGBCE, and its evidential and procedural requirements, are set out in its detailed technical guidance  
<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/documents/lgbce/guidance-policy-and-publications/guidance/proposing-new-wards-guidance.pdf> . LGBCE’s web site also includes interactive mapping where it is possible to generate indicative maps with revised ward boundaries  
<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/2215>.
8. Whilst the final decision rests with the Commissioners, their preference is to build as many of their recommendations as possible on locally generated proposals. The Council’s Cross-Party working Group have met on a number of occasions to consider possible ward patterns. A number of potential warding patterns were considered at a Members Seminar on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Feedback from the seminar is being used by the Cross Party Working Group to develop one or more proposals which can be considered by the Committee.
9. The LGBCE’s technical guidance details the statutory criteria for a review which comprises three elements:-
  - i. **Electoral Equality**  
This means ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of each vote is the same regardless of where an individual lives in the local authority area.
  - ii. **Community Identity**  
This means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
  - iii. **Effective and Convenient Local Government**  
This means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a

whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, we must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council.

10. The LGBCE will expect to receive proposals from the Council and other interested parties. Those interested parties are likely to include political groups either endorsing the Council proposal or submitting their own proposition, if consensus is not achieved around the Council proposal. LGBCE recognise that any recommendations they may make are likely to have local political implications, but that is not a factor they take into account. They are also alive to the fact that political groups “may seek to obtain an electoral advantage in contributing to a review”. LGBCE’s task is to ensure that its recommendations are based on evidence, and that the representations of all those participating in a review are treated equally and without bias.

### **Proposals of the Cross Party Member Working Group**

11. The proposals being developed by the Cross Party Member Working Group to be circulated at the meeting attempt to ensure:-
  - that all electoral variances are within the +/- 10% criteria set by the Commission;
  - that they provide good equality of representation across Doncaster Borough;
  - that they address the electoral imbalances by making minimal changes to existing well defined ward boundaries;
  - that the changes will not have a significant divisive impact on existing communities and in some cases will more appropriately reflect community interests; and
  - they will have no impact on existing Parish Councils and the existing well defined parish communities
  - that they have regard to the projected 5 year changes in electorate numbers
12. The Committee is asked to consider any proposals of the Cross Party Member Working Group and recommend to Council on 30 January with or without modification, draft warding proposals for submission to the LGBCE. The closing date for submissions to the LGBCE is 3 February 2014.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

13. The process for the review is determined by statute and the guidance issued by LGBCE. The options available to the Council and other interested parties at this stage of the consultation process relate to recommendations in respect of warding changes to meet the criteria of the LGBCE. The final

decision on ward boundaries rests with the LGBCE subject only to the ratification of Parliament.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

14. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 consolidated the electoral review provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The process for the review is summarised in the guidance published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England which is available on both the Commission's and the Council's website. The terms of reference for this committee include the making of recommendations to Full Council in respect of electoral reviews.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

15. The cost of the electoral review is met by the Council. The costs to date are limited to officer time and the hosting of material on the Council's website.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Boundary Commission Guide on Council Size  
Member Briefing

**JO MILLER**  
**RETURNING OFFICER**