



# Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>17 November 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Electoral Review</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic. Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>

## **Recommendations:**

- (1) to adopt the recommendations made by the Electoral Review Working Group, as set out in Annex 1.
- (2) to recommend Council that these should form the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on proposed wards for Buckinghamshire Council

## **Reason for decision:**

The Committee has been asked to make recommendations to Council on the Local Government Boundary Commission's proposed wards for Buckinghamshire Council. The Electoral Review Working Group has assisted the Committee by recommending certain changes which it believes would achieve a better balance of the statutory criteria. The Committee is asked to adopt these recommendations and commend them to Council.

## **1. Background:**

1.1 On 2 August 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission published its proposed pattern of wards for Buckinghamshire Council to apply from the Council elections in 2025. This followed a public consultation earlier this year during which the Commission received submissions from various sources, including this Council. In the event, the Commission did not follow this Council's submission. As such, Council agreed that the Committee should advise Council on the appropriate response to the current

consultation. The Commission is proposing a pattern of 51 wards with, variously, one, two or three member representation, achieving 98 members overall. The Commission's proposals can be found on their [website here](#).

1.2 The Commission will consider any comments on its proposals. However, it is not seeking detailed alternative submissions. Rather, the Commission is minded to implement the pattern of wards it has proposed and is seeking comments on their practicality. The Commission has invited views specifically on 10 of its proposals. This is where the Commission feels it may not have the level of local evidence it might otherwise wish.

1.3 In approaching its work, the Electoral Review Working Group invited all members to comment on the Commission's proposals. It then addressed itself as follows:

- A) Reviewing each of the 10 proposals on which the Commission invited comment;
- B) Reviewing any other refinement suggested by local members

1.4 The Group's recommendations are listed on Annex 1. Maps illustrating the recommendations, as appropriate, are at Annex 2.

## **2. Recommendations of the Working Group**

2.1 The Working Group was mindful only to suggest changes where they substantially improved upon the Commission's own proposal. In most cases, the suggested change actively builds on the Commission's working assumptions that:

- A) Parishes be kept whole where possible
- B) Rural wards are not too geographical spread out and diverse
- C) Electoral variance is within acceptable limits
- D) Urban and rural areas should not be mixed unless there are clear community identity reasons

2.2 In one instance (Chiltern Ridges), the Group felt that the Commission's ward was too large, diverse and artificial. It has therefore recommended that the constituent parishes be located instead, as appropriate, in Chesham North, Chesham South or Chalfont St Giles & Little Chalfont Wards.

2.3 In three cases, the Group has recommended that the Commission's individual wards be merged with another in the interests of community identity while retaining electoral variance:

- A) Grendon Underwood with Steeple Claydon
- B) Horwood with Winslow
- C) Newton Longville with Quainton

2.4 In other cases, the Group is proposing a modification to the Commission's proposals in the interests of community identity.

- A) Buckingham Ward: the addition of Leckhampstead Parish (from Horwood Ward)

- B) Iver and Gerrards Cross & Denham: recognition that New Denham has no connection with the Commission’s proposed Iver Ward; and that Denham Parish should be kept whole within the Gerrards Cross & Denham. Similarly, the parish boundary for Gerrards Cross should be restored and kept whole.
- C) Little Marlow Parish: to remain whole (e.g. within Chiltern Villages) rather than split as proposed by the Commission
- D) Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater and Beaconsfield: transfer of certain areas (of the former) which more clearly identify with Beaconsfield. An additional benefit is a reduction in the Commission’s currently excessive variance for Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater
- E) Terriers & Amersham Hill and Totteridge & Bowerdean: transferring certain polling districts and amending councillor numbers to achieve one 3 member ward and one 1 member ward (instead of two 2 member wards). The resulting wards to be Terriers & Totteridge (3) and Bowerdean (1).

2.5 The Working Group considered other proposals but felt that concentrating on these key areas where community identity could be improved, would be more advantageous. A proposal to create a one-member ‘West of Wycombe Villages’ ward out of the two-member Chiltern Villages Ward; and a proposal to form a two-member ward by merging the Commission’s one-member Wing and Birtton & Kingsbrook proposals were not endorsed as no consensus had been reached between local members in either case. It was noted that members could in any event make a personal suggestion directly to the Commission.

### 3. Next steps

3.1 The Committee’s recommendations will be considered by Council on 30 November. If approved, they will form the basis of the response to the Commission’s consultation.

3.2 The Commission’s revised timetable then envisages the following. None of these further steps involve input from the Council, unless the Commission wish to query any of the recommendations made to it before final publication.

<b>Final report</b> We publish the Commission’s recommendations	28 February 2023
<b>Order laid in Parliament</b> This makes the recommendations law	Spring 2023
<b>Effective date</b> The new arrangements apply to elections after this date	May 2025

## **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 This report does not contain any financial implications. At present, the Council is participating in a consultation on the future electoral boundaries of the Council. There is no cost in responding to the consultation and any outcome will not be effected until the election of 2025.
- 4.2 In considering these recommendations, the Committee is fulfilling the delegation granted to it by Council. The Council is a statutory consultee to the electoral review.

## **5. Corporate implications**

- 5.1 The outcome of the electoral review will shape the nature of the Council's elected member representation from the May 2025 elections and as such will have significant corporate implications at that time. For now, there are no current corporate implications.