



# Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 July 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 determine whether to adopt any of the recommendations made by the Electoral Review Working Group, as set out in paragraph 2.1
- (2) If so, to ask the Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services to communicate these additional options for change to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
- (3) To note the Commission's published timeframe for the next consultation phase, as set out in paragraph 3.2.

## **Reason for decision:**

The Committee has delegated authority to determine any options to amend the Council's electoral review submission, provided that the amendments are broadly in keeping with the overall patterns of wards approved by Council. The Electoral Review Working Group has recommended the adoption of certain changes which would potentially achieve a better balance of the relevant criteria of electoral equality, community identity and effective government. The Committee is asked to decide if these recommendations should be accepted.

## **1. Background:**

1.1 In April 2022, Council approved this Committee's recommendation of a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on the second stage of the electoral review of Buckinghamshire Council. This related to a proposed pattern

of wards, the Commission already being minded the new pattern be based on 98 councillors.

1.2 Council submitted a proposed a pattern of 50 wards based, largely, on two-member representation for each ward, achieving 98 councillors overall. A map illustrating the submission [is here](#).

1.3 As the submission overview makes clear at **Annex 1**, Council was aware that certain aspects of its proposal would potentially be the subject of future dialogue with the Commission. The Council was mindful that in some instances its own proposals needed revising to come within the acceptable threshold for electoral equality: that is, to bring the electorate figure (per councillor) within +/-10% of the Commission's average. It was also envisaged that some areas may benefit for adjustment to achieve better community identity.

1.4 It was agreed that the Electoral Review Working Group should review any options for change and recommend proposals to this Committee.

## 2. Proposals recommended to the Committee

2.1 The Working Group has recommended the following options for change:

**A. Booker, Cressex and Castlefield and West Wycombe Wards:** to revise the Council's submission by including the portion around Spearing Road and Grenfell Avenue (part of polling district Oakridge and Castlefield No. 2) back into Booker, Cressex and Castlefield ward; and revising the boundary in the Booker part of the ward. The changes are reflected in the map at **Annex 2**. Electoral equality would be as follows:

Proposal Variance	Ward	Ward Members
-7%	West Wycombe (8,417 electors)	2
4%	Booker, Cressex & Castlefield (9,378 electors)	2

**B. Farnham, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Poges:** to create three one member wards, better to reflect the community identity, particularly around Farnham. This would also involve the inclusion of a small portion of the Fulmer area within Stoke Poges, to enhance electoral equality. Under the Council's current submission, Farnham Common and Burnham Beeches would otherwise come together as a two-member ward. The changes are reflected in **Annex 3**. Electoral equality would be as follows:

Proposal Variance	Ward	Ward Members
-8%	Burnham Beeches (4,174 electors)	1
9%	Farnham (4,937 electors)	1
-9%	Stoke Poges (4,123 electors)	1
-2%	Denham & Wexham (8,833 electors)	2

**C. Aston Clinton & Weston Turville; Bierton and Wing:** to revise the Council’s submission by bringing the Coppice Way polling district into Aylesbury North ward (from the proposed Bierton and Wing Ward). Creating a more coherent Aylesbury North ward is then further enhanced by the inclusion of the Oldham’s Meadow polling district into Aylesbury North, from Watermead & Buckingham Park ward. The changes are reflected in **Annex 4**.

<b>Council’s Submission Variance</b>	<b>Proposal Variance</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Ward Members</b>
18%	6%	Aston Clinton & Weston Turville (9,621 electors)	2
-5%	7%	Aylesbury East (9,652 electors)	2
-6%	9%	Aylesbury North (9,822 electors)	2
14%	3%	Bierton & Wing (9,346 electors)	2
2%	-6%	Watermead & Buckingham Park (4,267 electors)	1
7%	7%	Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville (9,647 electors)	2

2.2 If the Committee adopts the recommendations, the total number of councillors would still meet the 98 councillor target set by the Commission. It would depart from a principle of the Council’s submission only marginally, by creating two additional single member wards (Farnham and Burnham Beeches) out of the Farnham Common & Burnham Beeches ward. The Working Group felt that community identity would best be served by this change.

### 3. Next steps

3.1 If any of the recommended changes are accepted, and recommendation (2) is then adopted, these changes will be communicated to the Commission as options for them to consider. The Commission will then do this either before they issue their own proposal or as part of the next phase of the process.

3.2 The Commission has published a revised timeframe for the remainder of the electoral review. The consultation on their own proposal is expected to begin on 2 August for just over two months. The timeframe is this:

<b>Consultation on proposals</b> You can give us your views on our proposed new pattern of wards	2 August 2022	10 October 2022
<b>Final report</b> We publish the Commission’s recommendations	10 January 2023	
<b>Order laid in Parliament</b> This makes the recommendations law	Spring 2023	
<b>Effective date</b>	May 2025	

The new arrangements apply to elections after this date		
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- 3.3 The Committee has delegated authority to respond to that consultation if the Commission's proposal is largely in accordance with the Council's. If the Commission's proposal is substantially different from the Council's, then this Committee should make any recommendations to Council on any proposed response to the Commission.
- 3.4 Currently, Council is scheduled to meet on 21 September. A special meeting of this Committee will be needed, in any event, during Commission's consultation period to consider the Council's response to it.

#### **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. A further consultation stage is still to come.
- 4.2 In considering these recommendations, the Committee is fulfilling the delegation granted to it by Council in April 2022. The Council is a statutory consultee to the electoral review and Council, having submitted a response to the Commission, has given responsibility to the Committee to make appropriate amendments to it.

#### **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. As such, this will be a significant corporate implication. For now, there are no current corporate implications. The Committee is fulfilling its delegated responsibility to engage with the Commission's electoral review process.