



Report to Council

Date:	26 April 2023
Title:	Buckinghamshire Electoral Review
Relevant councillor(s):	All
Author and/or contact officer:	Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic. Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
Ward(s) affected:	All

Recommendation:

- (1) to adopt the recommendation of the Standards & General Purposes Committee that the proposals set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission in their further consultation (and summarised at paragraph 2.3 and in Annex 1) be accepted;
- (2) to ask the Service Director Legal and Democratic Services to submit this response to the Commission on behalf of the Council.

Reason for decision:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has issued a further consultation on four proposed wards in the south-east of the county. The Standards & General Purposes Committee is tasked by Council to make recommendations to it on potential responses to electoral review consultations. This report summarises the Committee's recommendation in response to the proposed wards of Chalfont St Peter, Farnhams & Stoke Poges, Gerrards Cross & Denham and Iver.

1. Background:

1.1 It was expected that, on 28 February, the Local Government Boundary Commission would publish its final proposals for the pattern of wards for Buckinghamshire Council. Instead, the Commission launched a limited further consultation on revised proposals for four wards in the south-east of the county. These amendments were made by the Commission in response to a significant number of objections to their previous proposals in this area. The Commission believes the revisions achieve the best balance of their criteria: community identity, acceptable electoral variance, effective local

government and their wish to minimise the number of parishes which would be split across Buckinghamshire wards. The Commission's report can be found on their [website here](#) with an [illustrative map](#).

1.2 The Commission has not indicated what position it has taken on the remainder of the county. Instead, it now intends to publish the final recommendations on all wards on 30 May. The consultation officially ended on 11 April but the Commission has given this authority an extension to 26 April to enable Council to consider the matter, in the meantime noting the recommendation of this Committee.

1.3 As in previous stages, the Committee received recommendations from the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group formed under the Committee. Drop-in sessions for ward members were arranged with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Working Group. The Working Group recommended acceptance of the Commission's proposals. On 13 April, the Committee agreed likewise and this is the recommendation now before Council.

2. The Commission's proposals

2.1 The Commission's report notes: "it has received sufficient evidence relating to the rest of Buckinghamshire to finalise its recommendations, so this [new] consultation is focused...only" on the four south-east wards.

2.2 In response to feedback, the Commission is proposing to change each of the four proposed wards: Chalfont St Peter, Farnhams & Stoke Poges, Gerrards Cross & Denham and Iver. As the revised proposals were new, the Commission felt obliged to consult on them.

2.3 Annex 1 summarises the key changes envisaged by the Commission. In short, these are:

- A. To reverse the proposed extension of Chalfont St Peter southwards into Gerrards Cross Parish: based on "strong community-based evidence"
- B. Consequently, to reduce the number of Chalfont St Peter councillors by one: to achieve acceptable electoral variance for that ward (10%)
- C. To restore New Denham from Iver to Gerrards Cross & Denham: based on feedback that there were no "strong community or geographic links" between New Denham and Iver Parish. (The revision now aligns with this Council's original submission)
- D. To place Hedgerley and Fulmer within Farnhams & Stoke Poges: restoring Denham wholly to Gerrards Cross & Denham would result in that ward being out of variance; however, placing Fulmer & Hedgerley within the Farnhams & Stoke Poges Ward would achieve balance for both wards but would do so by expanding the latter from two members to three.

- E. To pluralise 'Farnham' to demonstrate that both Farnham Royal and Farnham Common are included in the name "Farnhams & Stoke Poges".

2.4 This results in one fewer councillor overall, 97 instead of the previously proposed 98. The Commission had indicated, throughout the review, that the "98" number may marginally increase or decrease depending on the final balance of criteria for each ward.

2.5 The representation and variance would therefore be:

Ward	Electorate	Variance	Councillors
Chalfont St Peter	10069	10%	2
Farnhams & Stoke Poges	11990	-12.51%	3
Gerrards Cross & Denham	14304	4%	3
Iver	9308	2%	2

2.6 It is notable, from A-E above, that the revised proposals are interlocked, with a decision for one ward having some impact on another. This demonstrates the consideration at the heart of an electoral review: achieving a balance of the relevant criteria for each ward and for its neighbours.

2.7 The Commission considers their revisions achieve a working balance of the criteria: only one ward would exceed the variance, others coming well within it or at the acceptable limit of it; only one parish (Chalfont St Peter) would cross a Buckinghamshire Ward boundary; and each reflects an acceptable balance of community identity.

3. The Committee's recommendation

3.1 The Committee met on 13 April to agree a recommendation to Council.

3.2 The Committee noted the interlocking nature of the proposals for each ward. It noted that the local ward members for three of the four proposed wards were largely supportive of the changes.

3.3 The Committee noted that process of balancing the criteria necessarily involved a compromise between them. It concluded that the Commission's proposals presented the most workable balance of the criteria, having regard to the constraints of geography and the interlocking implications for each ward.

3.4 The Group recommends the adoption of the Commission's revised proposals.

4. Next steps

4.1 The Commission's revised timetable is:

Final report Publication of the Commission's recommendations	May 2023
Order laid in Parliament This makes the recommendations law	To be confirmed
Effective date The new arrangements apply to elections after this date	May 2025

5. Legal and financial implications

5.1 This report does not contain any financial implications. 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.

5.2 The Council is a statutory consultee to the electoral review.

6. Corporate implications

6.1 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.