

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE – 27 JANUARY 2020

**REQUEST TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS**

REPORT OF DIRECTOR FOR GOVERNANCE

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR SHAUN DAVIES – LEADER OF THE
COUNCIL**

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

1.1 The Boundary Review Committee is asked to authorise officers to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to seek a review of the electoral arrangements in place in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin. Members are asked to consider whether any request for a review should include a request for the parish arrangements to be reviewed alongside a review of the borough arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Boundary Review Committee:-

2.1 Delegates authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Boundary Review Committee, to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England asking it to commence a review of electoral arrangements for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>These proposals contribute to the objectives of Democracy – if a review is undertaken, it is likely that residents in some localities will have fairer access to democratic representation.</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	<i>Whilst there is no specific impact upon any particular group at the</i>

		<p><i>moment, there may be a need to consider community impacts should a review be commenced. Any specific impacts will be considered when reporting on any proposals put forward.</i></p>
<p>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</p>		<p><i>If a review is commenced the timetable is very much dependent upon the workload of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. However, it is anticipated that, to complete all steps of a review will take approximately 2 years. The timetable will be dictated by the Commission and the key milestones will be reported to a further Committee meeting but we would expect arrangements to be in place for the 2023 Borough/ Parish elections.</i></p>
<p>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>The financial implications of this recommendation will be dependent on the initial agreement of the Boundary Commission to carry out a review and, in the longer term, the details of the resulting final order agreed by Parliament.</i></p> <p><i>If agreement is received, a further report will be presented to the Boundary Review Committee setting out the likely scope and timetable for the review and more detailed financial implications associated with the process. This is likely to include the need for an additional post to support the review for which there is currently no funding available. A bid against the Council's capacity fund would need to be made to cover this cost, which for a 2-year post would be £68k.</i></p> <p><i>Any financial implications arising from the final recommendations of a review will be identified in a future report; these may arise if there is any change in the number of wards and Members.</i></p> <p><i>TAS 8.1.2020.</i></p>

LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<i>Whilst there is no legal requirement for a review to be undertaken, if one is commenced, there is a legal process that must be followed. If the Commission agrees to a review, this will be covered in more detail in a further report to the Committee. AL 3/1/2020</i>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	<i>Not at this stage. Any impacts, risks and opportunities will be reported should the Local Government Boundary Commission for England agree a review.</i>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	<i>Whilst, at this stage, there are no impacts upon specific wards, if a review is undertaken, it is likely that there may be some specific wards that encounter greater changes than others. On the whole, however, any review is likely to have Borough-wide impacts.</i>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

4.1 A review of electoral arrangements within the Borough of Telford and Wrekin was last undertaken between 2012 – 2014. The changes arising out of that review were implemented in 2015 (apart from Station Road, Newport Oct 2018).

4.2 Since the last review, there has been significant growth in some areas within the Borough, most notably in Lawley. In 2015, Lawley had 6084 electors, in 2019 it has 7592 (an increase of 24.8%). Even in areas with less significant growth, such as Newport, there has been a noticeable change in the number of electors. In 2015, Newport had 8270 electors, in September 2019 it has 9127 (an increase of 10.4%).

4.3 Whilst there has already been some significant growth, there are plans for further development in many areas over the next few years. For example, there are plans for a further 900 houses in the Priorslee area. Furthermore, within the current Local Plan, there are approximately a further 8,500 houses to be delivered.

4.4 In administrative areas where significant growth has occurred, it can be the case that residents experience disproportionate representation. In turn, this can lead to reduced access to representation and democracy particularly for those in more high growth areas.

4.5 A review of electoral arrangements may consider any or all of the following matters:-

- a. The total number of councillors elected to the local authority;
- b. The number and boundaries of wards or divisions for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- c. The number of councillors for any ward or division of a local authority; and
- d. The name of any ward or division.

4.6 The Commission conducts an electoral review for two reasons:-

- a. At the request of the local authority; or
- b. If the local authority meets the criteria set out by the Commission (one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority OR 30% of wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority).

4.7 The average electorate for Telford and Wrekin is currently 2389 per member.

4.8 Currently, there are 5 wards whose electorate varies from the average electorate for the authority by +/- 10% or more.

4.9 There are a further 5 where the variance is +/- 5% or more with two of those being at almost 10% (Park at -9.34% and Muxton being at +8.53%). If population growth continues at its current rate, it is likely that both Park and Muxton will soon reach a 10% variance.

4.10 Between the most affected wards there is a 26% difference (Brookside is -12.84% whilst Horsehay & Lightmoor is +13.16% with Members in Brookside having more than 600 fewer electors than their colleagues in Horsehay & Lightmoor).

4.10 Whilst it is clear from assessing the figures that the authority does not currently meet the Commission's second criteria for undertaking a review, Members will note that the Commission also states it will consider undertaking a review where one is requested by the Local Authority. In making a request for a review, the Local Authority will be required to set out its reasons for doing so.

4.11 One of the reasons most frequently stated for seeking a review is that it helps to enhance community identities. Officers consider that there is a reasonable case to support a review on this basis. The primary area in which this is noticeable is that of Lawley. As a result of the extensive development that has occurred at Lawley over the last 10 years, a recognised and identifiable community has been created. Despite this, it is currently split into several Wards which do not reflect the vibrant community that Lawley now is.

4.12 Members will know that Lawley has a number of amenities within the centre that residents consider to be their village centre. Those living in Lawley also pay to “Bournville Stewardship Services in Lawley Village” which is intended to be used to manage the public open space, preserve the character of the area and encourage a strong community spirit. A plan of the Lawley area is attached for information.

4.13 It follows that, should a review be undertaken at Lawley, there is likely to be a need to review the wider boundaries within the Borough.

4.14 There is a clear process, with 6 distinct stages, governing an electoral review, assuming that the Boundary Commission for England agree to carry one out. In brief the stages are:-

a. Preliminary Stage

The Commission gathers information from the local authority being reviewed, including electoral forecasts and other electoral data. The Commission will meet with all councillors and, where applicable, parish and town councils as well as with officers.

b. Councillor Numbers

The Commission decides how many councillors should be elected to the local authority in the future. This is based upon evidence submitted from the local authority and other respondents. It will take a view on the council size consider the governance arrangements of the council, the council’s scrutiny functions, the representational role of councillors and future trends and plans for the council. It should be noted that Councillor numbers could remain the same, could be increased or decreased. Whilst the Council can make representations in this regard, it is a matter for the Commission to make its final recommendations.

c. Warding or Division Arrangements

At this stage, the Commissions seeks views from the public on the numbers, names and boundaries of wards and divisions as well as the number of councillors for each ward or division.

d. Draft recommendations

The Commission produces its draft recommendations on future arrangements and consultation commences.

e. Final recommendations

The final recommendations will be produced by the Commission. These recommendations will then be put to Parliament in the form of a draft order to be made law.

f. Parliamentary Scrutiny

Parliament considers the draft order and decides whether to accept or reject the recommendations of the Commission. This is done by way

of the “draft negative resolution procedure”. This means that the Commission can only confirm the order after it has been before each house 40 sitting days. If a debate takes place on the order and is lost, the order will not be made. Parliament has no power to modify the draft order.

By way of estimate only, the entire process will take approximately 2 years.

4.15 Members are asked to delegate authority to the Director of Governance (in consultation with the Chair of the Committee) to make an approach to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to seek its agreement to undertaking a review on the grounds as detailed in this report. In the event that such agreement is given, a further report will be presented to the Boundary Review Committee setting out the likely scope and timetable for such a review.

4.15 Should it be decided to seek a review of the Borough electoral arrangements, Members are asked to also consider whether or not there is a desire to review the Parish arrangements. There are three options open to the authority, as follows:-

- a. It could ask the Commission to include recommendations about parish arrangements within any review that it undertakes;
- b. It could wait until the conclusion of any Borough review to ascertain what consequential parish amendments are made as a result of the boundary review;
- c. It could undertake a borough-wide community governance review – this could be done whether or not the Commission includes parish arrangements within its review or even decides not to undertake a review at all, although there are differing timescales that apply dependent upon the circumstances.

4.16 It should be noted, however, that the Commission can only make recommendations relating to Parish/Town Councils that are directly affected by its recommendations for changes to borough wards. It cannot make recommendations to create, abolish or amend the external boundaries of parishes.

4.17 In the event that a review is undertaken, it is likely that there will be a significant impact upon resources within the Elections team and, possibly, the Democratic Services team. Should the Commission commence a review, it is anticipated that there will be a need for at least one full-time Project Officer to be appointed to manage the process. The exact need for resources will be dependent upon the scope of any review undertaken.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As set out in section 3 of this report.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Not applicable.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Not applicable.

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