

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Thursday, 3 June 2021 at 6.00 pm in Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford TF3 4HS

Present: Councillors K T Blundell, C Cassar (Chair), N A Dugmore, V J Holt (Vice-Chair), A D McClements and R A Overton

Apologies: Councillors E J Greenaway

BRC33 Declarations of Interest

None.

BRC34 Update on the LGBCE position and the proposed plan for Stage 2 (Warding Pattern)

The project officer gave a presentation to Members on the review of the electoral arrangements warding pattern submission.

A recommendation had come from the LGBCE that the Council retain its current Council size of 54 councillors, although they reserved the right to adjust this number up or down by 1 or 2 if that was a better fit on the warding pattern. Current Borough electorate was 133,071 and was projected to rise to 146,815 by 2027. The current ratio of councillor seats to electors was 2,464 which was expected to increase to 2,719 taking electorate growth up to 2027. Therefore the LGBCE has invited submissions for a suitable pattern of wards for the Borough based on 54 Councillors and 146,815 electors. The timetable was for a consultation on warding arrangements up until 2 August 2021, consultation on draft recommendations from 2 November 2021 to 10 January 2022 with the publication of final recommendations on 29 March 2022. There were three key legal factors being used to draw up new boundaries:

- Each councillor representing roughly the same number of voters
- Wards should reflect the local community interests and identities and the boundaries should be identifiable
- The new wards should promote effective and convenient local government.

The Commission would then give equal weight to all of the submissions.

As part of the review the LGBCE cannot change Borough or Parish boundaries or create new parishes, take into account Parliamentary boundaries or choose between the three statutory criteria but they can recommend the creation of new borough wards and polling districts and

recommend the creation of parish wards, the naming of wards and numbers of councillors elected to those wards.

Forecast growth across the Borough showed a 10% increase with significant housing growth in Lawley, Horsehay & Lightmoor, Ketley & Overdale and Wrockwardine. There was also significant growth in Priorslee, Apley Castle and Newport South & East wards. It was proposed that officers prepare broad outline proposals to be considered at the next meeting with the following areas:

- North Telford
- South Telford
- Lawley & Central Telford
- Rural
- Wellington and Newport

Assessment on the electorate numbers and appropriate representation and electoral equality could then be undertaken under the LGBCE statutory criteria.

It was recommended that the committee prepare outline proposals for a Borough warding pattern to fit a 54 seat Council and that due to the significant growth in Horsehay & Lightmoor and Ketley & Overdale that these wards were used as the starting point.

During the debate some Members raised whether the councillor survey that had been sent to the LGBCE had received any feedback or comment. Other Members felt it was important to not only prepare for the 54 member council size as suggested by the LGBCE but to work on an alternative size of 56 due to the foreseeable increase on electorate, the impact on local communities when dividing wards and to take into consideration the fluctuation of the percentages of the electorate in each ward due to development. This was echoed by other Members who had concerns regarding the variant to the numbers up to 2027 and the expected growth, together with the quality of the data and what data was required for identifying communities. Some Members referred to the technical guidance and felt that the planning department had supplied the LGBCE with the relevant details and that the figures were as accurate as they could be. The impact on some wards may be significant and splitting the wards may prove difficult although some wards may remain completely unchanged. A question was raised as to whether the 1 and 2 member wards would be retained.

The Project Officer confirmed that there was no compulsion for feedback or comments from the LGBCE and no response was expected to the workload survey. The first stage would be to work in sections and to complete the review logically and only make changes where necessary but there may be a knock on effect to some wards. With regard to 1 and 2 member wards, it depended on how the communities had grown, how they could be best represented and the identifying criteria ie community groups/activities and the

boundaries. This would be backed by evidence and rationale and significant growth highlighted going forward.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation be amended as follows:

- a) the committee prepare outline proposals for a Borough warding pattern to fit a 54 seat Council and that due to the significant growth in Horsehay & Lightmoor and Ketley & Overdale that this wards were used as the starting point; and
- a) the committee prepare an alternative proposal based on a 56 seat council in order to mitigate against any possible damage to local community ties and identities resulting from a 54 seat warding pattern.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:-

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the committee prepare outline proposals for a Borough warding pattern to fit a 54 seat Council and that due to the significant growth in Horsehay & Lightmoor and Ketley & Overdale that this wards were used as the starting point; and**
- b) the committee prepare an alternative proposal based on a 56 seat council in order to mitigate against possible damage to local community ties and identities resulting from a 54 seat warding pattern.**

The meeting ended at 6.36 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 24 June 2021