

## **CORPORATE COMMITTEE 17 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Report title:** Ward Boundary Review – Response to First Stage of Consultation by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

**Wards:** All

**Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care: Councillor Jim Dickson

**Report Authorised by:** Andrew Travers, Chief Executive and Returning Officer

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### **Report summary**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), an independent body set up by Parliament, is undertaking an electoral review of Lambeth. An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. The review is undertaken in two stages:

#### **Stage One**

- the total number of councillors elected to the local authority (Council size).

#### **Stage Two**

- the number and boundaries of wards or divisions for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- the number of councillors for any ward or division of a local authority; and,
- the name of any ward or division.

The LGBCE's review does not include Parliamentary or borough boundaries. The Council is recommended to agree the attached submission to the LGBCE in response to its first consultation on Stage Two.

### **Finance summary**

The report recommends a response to a consultation. If the Council's proposals were to be accepted there may be a need for additional polling stations and staff; the costs of which are outlined in paragraph 3.

### **Recommendations**

1. To approve the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) by the deadline of 21 September 2020 (**Appendix A**) for a proposed rewarding scheme.

2. To delegate authority to the Director, Legal and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to agree any minor amendments to the proposed scheme arising from any comments.

### **Special Circumstances Justifying Urgent Consideration**

The Chair is of the opinion that although this report had not been available for at least five clear days before the meeting, nonetheless it should be considered now as a matter of urgency because it is not possible to delay the response to the Boundary Commission until after the next meeting as the deadline for submission is on the 21 September 2020 and that the cause of the report missing the original agenda despatch was to try to agree a cross-party response on behalf of the Council.

## 1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking an electoral review of Lambeth. The Commission conducts an electoral review of a council for two reasons:
- 1) At the request of the local authority; or,
  - 2) If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria that is:
    - a. If one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority; or,
    - b. If 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.
- 1.2 The LGBCE is undertaking this review because Lambeth meets the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality, in that Bishops Ward in March 2020 only had 7,615 electors, a negative variance of -35% from the average of number for each ward of three councillors of 11,649. In addition, three wards: Coldharbour, Larkhall and Thornton have a positive variance of over 10%. It has also been more than 20 years since the last review, which reported in June 1999, and resulted in the reduction in the number of councillors by one and all wards having three members. **Appendix 1** to the submission set out the electoral variance in March 2020.
- 1.3 An electoral review examines existing electoral arrangements and proposes changes for the whole local authority and has two distinct parts:

### Stage One

- 1.4 The total number of councillors to be elected to the Council: council size. The Council agreed its response to the Commission's consultation in February 2020, recommending that the number of councillors should remain the same at 63. On 14 July the LGBCE launched Stage Two of the review and also notified the Returning Officer that it was minded to recommend to Parliament that Lambeth retain 63 councillors.

### Stage Two

- 1.5 The names, number and boundaries of wards and the number of councillors to be elected from each ward. There are two parts to Stage Two

#### Part 1 – 14 July to 21 September 2020

- 1.6 The LGBCE has invited proposals from the Council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral wards based on 63 councillors. At this stage anyone can make a submission to LGBCE which will consider all evidence, whoever it is from, and whether it applies to the whole of Lambeth or just a small part of the council.
- 1.7 Once the first stage of consultation ends, the LGBCE will draw up draft recommendations for new warding patterns which balance the three statutory criteria below:
- To deliver electoral equality where each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the borough.
  - That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities; and,
  - That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

#### Part 2 - 5 January to 15 March 2021

- 1.8 The LGBCE will publish a draft revised warding pattern and launch a further round of consultation. Its final recommendations will be published on 1 June 2021 and will be laid before Parliament for

45 days before being adopted. The outcome of the review will be implemented for the May 2022 council elections.

- 1.9 The proposed consultation response is being presented to Corporate Committee as it is the committee responsible for the discharge of the Council's functions in relation to elections (Constitution, Part 2, How the Council Makes Decisions, Corporate Committee, page 30, Rule 13).
- 1.10 The submission was produced by the cross-party member working group. This does not prevent individual political groups, individual councillors or members of the public from making submissions in response to this consultation. The LGBCE seeks and welcomes as wide a range of views as possible.

## 2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1 Lambeth's submission to the LGBCE, which is a warding pattern based on 63 councillors, recognises that there is a clear need for review, and that changes are required as demonstrated by the table showing electoral variances. It considers the LGBCE's statutory criteria (electoral equality; community identity and effective and convenient local government) and presents a balanced response to them. Lambeth's proposals are based on the analysis of electoral data, building developments and our knowledge of established communities in the borough. In the view of the Chief Executive and Returning Officer, Lambeth's proposals fully meet the statutory criteria while also presenting a realistic warding design based on our assessment of current and future council size.
- 2.2 According to the LGBCE's requirements the Council needed to base its warding pattern on the anticipated electorate in 2026 (five years after the recommendations of the LGBCE are due to be published). The estimated electorate in 2026 is 256,560 giving an average of 4,072 electors per councillor. In March 2002 we had an electorate of 244,634 giving an average of 3,883 electors per councillor. Appendix 1 to the submission.
- 2.3 The projected electorate for 2026 was calculated for each polling district using a tool supplied by the LGBCE. This analysed the electorate for 2018-20 and made a calculation based on a formula from the Office for National Statistics. Those calculations were supplemented by figures for additional electors which would result from new developments across the borough which the Planning Directorate anticipate being occupied by 2026. As the LGBCE formula is designed to take account of new developments which would produce up to 30 electors we only added information about development which would yield 30 or more electors. We calculated that our current residential unit to elector ratio is 1:6 and therefore any developments of 19 units or over which would yield 30 or more electors were included in the calculations. A more detailed explanation of this calculation is set out in **Appendix 2** of the submission.

### Proposed Scheme

- 2.4 A cross-party member working group, chaired by Councillor Jim Dickson, was set up to consider matters relating to all stages of the review. In order to redraw ward boundaries the Council contracted with StatMap to provide an interactive map which showed the projected electorate for 2026. Each political party represented on the Council had its own iteration of StatMap on which to prepare a proposed scheme.
- 2.5 The proposed scheme which is being recommended by the Member Working party for agreement by the Corporate Committee can be seen using this link

- 2.6 The proposed scheme adheres to the LGBCE's statutory criteria:
- To deliver electoral equality where each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the borough;
  - That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities; and,
  - That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.
- 2.7 It recommends changes to all of the ward boundaries. In addition it recommends the creation of a new three member ward, Vauxhall Riverside in the north of the borough in order to provide increase representation in an areas where considerable residential development is taking place. It recommends that Bishop's and St Leonards wards are reduced to two members. The submission sets out an option whereby either Knights Hill or Gipsy Hill have two councillors with the other ward retaining three councillors. The Council's preferred option is for the boundary to be drawn so that Knights Hill has two councillors and Gipsy Hill retains three councillors.
- 2.8 A full explanation of the proposed changes and the reasons for them is attached in the submission **(Appendix A)**
- 2.9 The proposed scheme means that the current warding arrangements will be improved overall as the electoral variance for all wards will be significantly below the +/-10% threshold, within which LGBCE considers a ward to have good electoral equality. **Appendix 5** to the submission lists the new wards and the electoral variances. The highest electoral variance is 3.8%
- 2.10 The proposal improves electoral equality between eligible voters and also allows for as yet unforeseen electorate variations to occur while maintaining relative parity. The Council has put forward a scheme of 19 three members wards and 3 two members ward which will enable residents to choose which councillor they wish to contact and will allow ward members to develop different specialisms. We have argued against one member wards and have limited two member wards as these restrict resident choice and do not provide resilience if a councillor is ill or on holiday.

### **Parliamentary Boundary Review**

- 2.11 A Parliamentary boundary review is due to start in 2021 and will be completed by July 2023. It is based on the number of electors on 1 March 2020. The number of MPs will be fixed at 650 and the 2018 review will not be implemented. The review will be based on the current ward boundaries as they are on 1 December 2020. The LGBCE criteria does not take account of Parliamentary constituency boundaries. It states: "Each review will be of one local authority and we will only look at the electoral arrangements of that authority. Consequently, if we are reviewing a district we will not be altering any county division boundaries, and vice versa. We have no involvement with parliamentary constituency boundaries, which are reviewed by the Boundary Commission for England - a separate body."
- 2.12 Lambeth's current constituency boundaries run along existing ward boundaries. The proposed ward boundaries do cross some existing constituency boundaries as to do otherwise would have required us to follow existing ward boundaries, which in turn would have restricted our efforts to

best follow the LGBCE's statutory criteria. The Parliamentary boundaries may change and therefore Lambeth would have unnecessarily constricted itself. If the proposed Parliamentary boundaries are not co-terminus with the final recommendations of the LGBCE the Council will be able to respond to consultation to ask that the new ward boundaries are followed.

- 2.13 In some places, the proposed ward boundaries broadly follow the boundaries that preceded them, as these were a good fit onto the communities and boundaries in the borough. Where changes have been proposed to existing boundaries, this is the result of the changing distribution of electors and/or the creation of new communities following building developments and demographic shifts.

### **3. FINANCE**

- 3.1 The report recommends a response to a consultation about ward boundaries. Following the publication by the LGBCE of its final recommendation for the ward boundaries in June 2021 the Council will undertake a polling district and station review. This may potentially identify the need for additional polling stations. The Council does pay a hire charge for polling stations and also pays staff on duty. The current payment for three staff at a polling station is £907.

### **4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY**

- 4.1 There are no specific legal implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 4.2 There were no additional comments from Democratic Services.

### **5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION**

- 5.1 The report recommends agreement of the Council's response to the LGBCE's consultation prepared by the cross-party Member Working Party. The Council is therefore not required to consult stakeholders. Information about the consultation was sent to the Borough Commander for Lambeth as the Safer Neighbourhood Teams for the police are organised by ward.
- 5.2 The Council is required by the LGBCE to help publicise its consultation. The Council is required to send out information to its stakeholders and display the LGBCE's posters in its public buildings. The consultation and therefore the public briefing, which was due to be held at the beginning of the process, was put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council made a proposal to the LGBCE setting out how it could support an online briefing and the publicity we would provide for the meeting and consultation. The LGBCE commended the proposal and held its first online briefing on 13 July at the start of the consultation. The briefing was attended by 65 people, which is far more than attend their public meetings, and the recording of the meeting is available online. The publicity from Lambeth has included an email to all of the 17,500 stakeholders on our distribution list, two articles in Lambeth Talk, an article in Love Lambeth, information on the elections and consultation pages on the website and various social media posts.

### **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The equalities impact assessment is attached as **Appendix B**. There is not expected to be any negative impacts on the electorate as the review is undertaken in order to decrease the electoral variance between wards.

## **8. COMMUNITY SAFETY**

- 8.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report. The Metropolitan Police's Safer Neighbourhood Teams are established on a ward basis. Information about the consultation has been sent to Lambeth's Borough Commander.

## **9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environmental**

- 9.1 None.

### **Health**

- 9.2 None.

### **Corporate Parenting**

- 9.3 None.

### **Staffing and accommodation**

- 9.4 As set out in paragraph 3, a polling district and polling station review will take place once the Commission's final recommendations are published in June 2021. This may result in additional polling stations and additional polling staff being required on the day of poll.

### **Responsible Procurement**

- 9.5 None.

## **10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 10.1 The below list sets out key deadlines for this report:

- 14 July to 21 September: LGBCE consultation on Stage 1;
- 5 January 2021: publication of LGBCE's draft proposals;
- 6 January to 15 March 2021: LGBCE consultation on Stage 2;
- 1 June 2021: Publication of final recommendations;
- Summer / autumn 2021: Parliamentary order made; and,
- May 2022: borough council elections.

<b>AUDIT TRAIL</b>				
<b>Consultation</b>				
<b>Name and Position/Title</b>	<b>Lambeth Directorate</b>	<b>Date Sent</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Comments in paragraph:</b>
Councillor Jim Dickson	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	18.08.20	27.08.20	
Andrew Travers Chief Executive and Returning Officer	Chief Executive	07.08.20	08.09.20	
Nisar Visram, Finance	Finance and Property	18.08.20	07.09.20	
Andrew Pavlou, Legal Services – Principal Lawyer, Governance	Legal and Governance	07.09.20	08.09.20	
David Rose, Democratic Services Officer	Legal and Governance	18.08.20	03.09.20	
Chris John, Electoral Services Manager	Legal and Governance	14.08.20	20.08.20	

<b>REPORT HISTORY</b>	
<b>Original discussion with Cabinet Member</b>	27.07.20
<b>Report deadline</b>	09.09.20
<b>Date final report sent</b>	11.09.20
<b>Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?</b>	No
<b>Key decision report</b>	No
<b>Date first appeared on forward plan</b>	Not applicable
<b>Key decision reasons</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Background information</b>	<a href="#">Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,</a>
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Submission to LGBCE Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix 1 – 2020 Electorate and 2026 Projected Electorate Appendix 2 – Lambeth’s Electorate Forecasting Methodology Appendix 3 – Map of Lambeth’s current wards Appendix 4 – Map of Lambeth’s current wards Appendix 5 – Proposed Wards