

CORPORATE COMMITTEE 8 APRIL 2021

Report title: Ward Boundary Review – Lambeth Council Response to Second Stage of Consultation by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Wards: All

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance: Councillor Andy Wilson

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. The Council is now set to reply to Stage Two:

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 Draft Recommendations for consultation as part of Stage Two.

Finance summary

The report recommends a response to the 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 section 3.

Recommendations

1. To approve the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) by the deadline of 12 April 2021 (**Appendix A**).

2. To delegate authority to the Head of Democratic Services and Director, Legal and Governance in consultation with Councillor Jim Dickson 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, it should be considered as a matter of urgency because it is not possible to delay the response to the Boundary Commission until after the next Corporate Committee meeting as the deadline for submission is on the 12 April 2021.

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, as previously submitted in Stage One.
- 1.3 An electoral review examines existing electoral arrangements and proposes changes for the whole local authority and has two distinct stages:

Stage One - Complete

- 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 – In Progress

- 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 - Complete

- 1.6 The LGBCE invited proposals from the Council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral wards based on 63 councillors. At that stage anyone could make a submission to LGBCE which considered all evidence, whoever it is from, and whether it applied to the whole of Lambeth or just a small part.
- 1.7 Once the first stage of consultation ended, the LGBCE drafted recommendations for new warding patterns which balanced the three statutory criteria below (**Appendix B**):
- 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 February to 12 April 2021 – In Progress

- 1.8 The LGBCE has published a Draft Recommendations showcasing a revised ward pattern and has launched a further round of consultation. Its final recommendations will be published on 29 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 on the 8th April 2021, as it is one of the bodies 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). The deadline for submission to the LGBCE is the 12th April 2021.
- 1.10 The submission was produced by the cross-party Member Working Group. However, cross party agreement on the final proposals for revisions to the LGBCE borough wide map was not reached. 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 (**Appendix 1**). 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: LGBCE's Draft Recommendation (**Appendix B**), analysis of electoral data, building developments and our knowledge of established communities in the borough. In the view of the majority of the Member Working Group, Chief Executive and Returning Officer, Lambeth's proposals fully meet the statutory criteria while also presenting a representative and holistic warding design based on our assessment of community needs 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 2020 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, along with additional reasoning which now challenges LGBCE's forecasted electorate figures.

Proposed Scheme

- 2.4 A cross-party Member Working Group, chaired by Councillor Jim Dickson, was set up to consider matters relating to the final consultation. Similar to Stage One, the Council utilised the programme, StatMap, to provide an interactive map which showed the new ward boundaries and names for the projected electorate for 2026 as well as respond to the LGBCE's re-drawn of the wards.
- 2.5 The map of the proposed scheme which is being recommended for agreement by the Corporate Committee is in **Appendix 5**.

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 Utilising LGBCE's Draft Recommendations (**Appendix B**), the Working Group recommends 4 key changes to the ward boundaries proposed by LGBCE. This proposal shows 23 wards in comparison to LGBCE's 26 proposed wards. The key changes aim to balance the electorate variance, provide a wider ward councillor coverage and a more holistic representation of the communities in those key areas.

The proposal recommends changes to the following key areas as they are *currently* known:

- 1) Thornton, Brixton Hill, and Streatham Hill – agreed with LGBCE to expand ward boundaries to created wards Clapham Park and Thornton
- 2) Clapham Common, Larkhall, and Stockwell – amended LGBCE proposed boundaries and names to merge and create wards Clapham Common and Stockwell East & Landor
- 3) Streatham Hill and Thurlow Park – agreed with LGBCE proposed ward names, but merge two of the proposed wards to create Streatham Hill & St Martin's and Rosendale
- 4) Streatham South & Streatham Wells – merged two LGBCE proposed wards and changed the ward names to create Streatham Common & The Vale, and Streatham Wells

2.8 Along with the aforementioned changes to ward boundaries and ward names, the council is amending the number of councillors per ward. Specifically, the council is once more arguing against one-member wards. The proposal reasons that wards reliant upon a single part-time councillor carry much greater vulnerability due to the lack of availability of their representative due to family or work responsibilities, illness or incapacitation than those represented by two or three members.

2.9 A full explanation of the proposed changes and the reasons for them is attached in the submission (**Appendix A**)

Parliamentary Boundary Review

2.10 A Parliamentary boundary review has officially started (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. It should be noted, that the LGBCE does not take account of Parliamentary constituency boundaries.

2.11 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. 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.

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 £1,048.
- 3.2 As it is proposed for the number of Members to remain unchanged, there are no additional Member related costs anticipated.

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. This was prepared by the cross-party Member Working Group though it was not possible to reach cross-party agreement on the final proposals. Information about the consultation will be 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 Council made a proposal to the LGBCE setting out how it could support an online briefing and the public engagement events. A Lambeth Council hosted virtual engagement event was held as part of Stage Two of the consultation. The briefing was well attended and also had over 300 views. A 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, an article in Lambeth Talk, 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 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. An EQIA was completed at Stage one of the Consultation.

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 February 2021: publication of LGBCE's draft proposals;
- 6 February to 12 April 2021: LGBCE consultation on Stage 2;
- 29 June 2021: Publication of final recommendations;
- Summer / Autumn 2021: Parliamentary order made; and,
- May 2022: borough council elections.

AUDIT TRAIL				
Consultation				
Name and Position/Title	Lambeth Directorate	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Councillor Jim Dickson	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	06.04.21	06.04.21	
Bayo Dosunmu Strategic Director for Resident Services	Chief Executive	06.04.21	06.04.21	
Nisar Visram, Assistant Director, Corporate Finance	Finance and Property	06.04.21	06.04.21	Finance point 3.2 added
Tasnim Shawkat, Director of Legal & Governance	Legal and Governance	06.04.21	06.04.21	
Wayne Chandai, Head of CE's Office and Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	29.03.21	06.04.21	
Chris John, Electoral Services Manager	Legal and Governance	06.04.21	06.04.21	

REPORT HISTORY	
Original discussion with Cabinet Member	05.02.21
Report deadline	29.03.21
Date final report sent	06.04.21
Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?	No
Key decision report	No
Date first appeared on forward plan	Not applicable
Key decision reasons	Not applicable.
Background information	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ,
Appendices	Appendix A – Submission to LGBCE Appendix B – LGBCE Draft Recommendations 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 LGBCE'S Proposed Wards & names Appendix 5 – Map of Lambeth's Proposed Wards & names