

## **CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE – 8 JANUARY 2016**

### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Purpose**

1. This report sets out the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE ) in relation to new electoral arrangements for Leicestershire County Council, and seeks agreement to a County Council response to those recommendations.

### **Background**

2. The LGBCE is responsible for conducting electoral reviews. Electoral reviews are undertaken when electoral variances become notable. The LGBCE's criteria for initiating a review are as follows:-
  - (i) more than 30% of a council's wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
  - (ii) one or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%;
  - (iii) the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
3. The County Council and the LGBCE agreed that a review was required as one of the criteria for review had been met, namely that 30% of electoral divisions had an imbalance of more than 10%. The review process formally commenced in December 2014.

### **Statutory Rules**

4. The LGBCE has to work within the legislative guidelines and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act sets out the statutory criteria to which the LGBCE are required to have regard in conducting electoral reviews which include:

- (i) the need to secure equality of representation;
  - (ii) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (iii) the need to secure effective and convenient local government.
5. In relation to the community identities and interests criterion, the LGBCE would aim to determine boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, would not break local ties, and be long-lasting boundaries for divisions. The LGBCE will take into account factors such as the location and boundaries of parishes and the physical features of the local area when drawing boundaries.
6. In relation to parishes the legislation states:-
- (i) every ward of a parish having a parish council (whether separate or common) must lie wholly within a single electoral division of the relevant county council, and a single ward of the relevant district council; and
  - (ii) every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single electoral division of the county council and a single ward of the district council.
7. There is an additional requirement that when County Councils' electoral division boundaries are reviewed the LGBCE is required to have regard to the boundaries of district wards. When making their recommendations, the LGBCE must ensure that every electoral division is wholly within a single district, so that no division crosses the boundary between two neighbouring districts.
8. Finally, Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act also states that the LGBCE should take into account any changes to the number and distribution of electors that is likely to take place within the five years following the end of a review. This requirement meant that the County Council was asked to provide the LGBCE with electorate forecasts up to 2021.

### **The Review Process**

9. There are four main stages in the process for undertaking electoral reviews which are as follows:-

Stage 1	LGBCE to determine the Council size and agree electorate forecasts to 2021.
Stage 2	Invitation to interested persons to submit proposals for new electoral divisions
Stage 3	LGBCE to consider the proposals submitted and publish its draft recommendations for new electoral divisions consultation

Stage 4	LGBCE publishes its final recommendations on the new electoral divisions and an Order is laid in Parliament to give effect to this (April 16)
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## **Stage 1**

10. The first stage of the process commenced in late 2014. This involved the County Council commissioning external consultants, Edge Analytics, to assist in preparing electorate forecasts in line with the guidance laid down by the LGBCE. The outcome of this work was submitted to the LGBCE in March and those forecasts were agreed. The agreed forecasts now form the basis on which the Council's and other interested parties proposals have been constructed. The electorate forecasts can be found on the LGBCE website via the following link <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/east-midlands/leicestershire/leicestershire-county-council>.
11. As part of this first stage, the LGBCE invited the County Council to submit proposals on Council size. The question of Council size is the starting point in any electoral review, since it will determine the optimum 'councillor:elector ratio' across all electoral areas against which levels of electoral imbalance can be measured. The County Council submitted its proposals on Council size in March 2015 and put a case forward to retain the Council size at its current level – 55 members. The LGBCE on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015 indicated that it was minded to recommend a Council size of 55 members. Consequently, based on the forecasts and a council size of 55, each elected county councillor would represent 9,466 electors in 2014 rising to 9,984 in 2021. The Council Council's submission on Council size can be accessed via the following link [http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000134/M00004177/AI00043379/\\$ReportoftheConstitutionCommitteeAppendix1.docA.ps.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000134/M00004177/AI00043379/$ReportoftheConstitutionCommitteeAppendix1.docA.ps.pdf) .

## **Stage 2**

12. The second stage commenced on 12 May 2015 and ended on 21 July 2015 in which interested parties, including the County Council, were invited to submit proposal for new electoral boundaries.
13. To help prepare its scheme the County Council established a politically balanced Working Party comprising of members from the three main political groups to oversee all aspects of the review.
14. In preparing its submission the Working Party took into account the LGBCE's Electoral Review Technical Guidance - April 2014 and the statutory rules governing electoral reviews as set out in paragraphs 4 – 8 of this report and was mindful that the main reason that a review in Leicestershire was required was to improve electoral equality. The Working Party's approach was that, wherever possible, existing electoral divisions should be retained and that it would only propose changes where these were required to rectify electoral inequality.

15. The County Council's submission was approved by the Full County Council at its meeting on 8 July 2015 and submitted to the LGBCE within their timescale. A copy of the County Council's submission can be found via this link <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=4379&Ver=4>

### **Stage 3**

16. This report therefore concerns the third stage of the process following the publication of draft recommendations by the LGBCE on 17 November 2015. A copy of the draft recommendations are attached to this report.
17. The LGBCE are now consulting on their draft recommendations and interested parties, including the County Council, are requested to submit comments by 11 January 2016.
18. To help prepare the County Council's response to the LGBCE, the Working Party met on 4 December 2015.

### **Summary of LGBCE's Draft Recommendations**

19. The LGBCE are recommending that the Council still be made up of 55 members representing 51 single member and 2 two-member electoral divisions. This is different to the number of electoral divisions the County Council proposed, which was 53 single member and 1 two member divisions.
20. The LGBCE agreed with and recommended thirty two of the County Council's proposed electoral divisions, slightly modified a number of others and came up with suggestions for a number of its own divisions. A summary by District within the County is set out below:-

### **Blaby District**

21. The LGBCE have accepted the County Council's proposal for all seven electoral divisions, including the proposed two member division of Glenfields, Kirby Muxloe and Leicester Forest East.
22. However, it should be noted that the LGBCE will be making minor changes to the parish ward boundaries of Braunstone Town.

## **Charnwood Borough**

23. The LGBCE have accepted eight of the fourteen electoral divisions proposed by the County Council. These are: Birstall Electoral Division (ED), Bradgate ED, Loughborough East ED, Loughborough North ED, Loughborough North West ED, Loughborough South ED, Loughborough South West ED and Shepshed ED.
24. For the remaining six divisions the LGBCE used the County Council submission as the basis for the divisions they are proposing. Below is a summary of the changes:-

Quorn and Barrow ED and Rothley and Mountsorrel ED	The LGBCE decided to include Mountsorrel North End in Quorn and Barrow ED rather than Rothley and Mountsorrel ED. The LGBCE stated that this would improve electoral equality in the Rothley and Mountsorrel ED. As a result of the LGBCE's draft recommendation changes to the parish ward boundary of Mountsorrel Parish Council will be required.
Sileby and The Wolds ED, Syston Fosse ED, Syston Ridgeway ED and Thurmaston Ridgemere ED	The LGBCE have based these four divisions on the scheme submitted by the County Council. However the LGBCE have recommended that the town of Syston be split between three electoral divisions, Syston Fosse ED, Syston Ridgeway ED and Thurmaston Ridgemere ED and part of the parish Sileby be moved from Sileby & The Wolds ED to Syston Ridgeway ED. As a result of the LGBCE's draft recommendation changes to the parish ward boundaries for Sileby Parish Council and Syston Town Council will be required.

## **Harborough District**

25. The LGBCE have accepted four of the seven electoral divisions proposed by the County Council. These are Broughton Astley ED, Bruntingthorpe ED, Lutterworth ED, Market Harborough West and Foxton ED.

26. For the remaining three divisions the LGBCE used the County Council submission as the basis for the divisions they are proposing. Below is a summary of the changes:-

Gartree ED	The parishes of Tugby and Keythorpe be moved from the County Council's proposed Launde ED into this division. Also the LGBCE have proposed that the parishes of East Langton, Thorpe Langton and West Langton be transferred to Market Harborough East ED
Launde ED	The transfer of Tugby and Keythorpe from the proposed County Council submission to Gartree ED
Market Harborough East ED	The transfer of the parishes of East Langton, Thorpe Langton and West Langton from Gartree ED to this division.

### **Hinckley and Bosworth Borough**

27. The LGBCE have accepted seven of the nine electoral divisions proposed by the County Council. These are Burbage ED, De Montfort ED, Hollycroft ED, Groby and Ratby ED, Market Bosworth ED, Markfield ED, Desford and Thornton ED and St Mary's ED.
28. For the remaining two divisions, the LGBCE used the County Council submission as the basis for the divisions they are proposing. Below is a summary of the changes:-

Earl Shilton ED and Mallory ED	To improve electoral equality in the County Council's proposed Mallory ED the LGBCE have decided to transfer additional parts of the parish of Barwell to Earl Shilton ED. As a result of the LGBCE's draft recommendation changes to the parish ward boundary of Barwell will be required.
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### **Melton Borough**

29. The LGBCE did not accept any of the electoral divisions proposed by the County Council. However, the electoral divisions of Asfordby and Belvoir are

in essence the existing electoral divisions except that the parishes of Freeby and Wymondham will be transferred from Belvoir ED to Asfordby ED.

30. In relation to the town of Melton Mowbray this is currently split north/south. The LGBCE have recommended that the town should be divided east/west.

### **North West Leicestershire District**

31. The LGBCE have accepted five of the eight electoral divisions proposed by the County Council. These are Ashby de la Zouch ED, Castle Donington and Kegworth ED, Forest and Measham ED, Ibstock and Appleby ED and Valley ED.
32. For the three remaining electoral divisions the LGBCE have created new divisions and the detailed make up of these divisions is set out below:-

Coalville North ED	This division comprises the North West Leicestershire District Council wards of Coalville East, Coalville West, Hugglescote St Mary's and Snibston South, together with the unparished part of the Snibston North ward.
Coalville South ED	This division comprises the North West Leicestershire District Council wards of Bardon, Greenhill, Ellistown & Battleflat and Hugglescote St John's, together with the unparished part of the Castle Rock ward and the part of the Broom Leys ward lying to the south of Meadow Lane.
Whitwick ED	This division comprises the parishes of Charley and Whitwick together with the district council ward of Thringstone and that part of the Broom Leys ward lying to the north of Meadow Lane

### **Oadby and Wigston Borough**

33. The LGBCE accepted one of the five electoral divisions submitted by the County Council, that of Oadby Uplands Grange, but changed the name to Oadby North.
34. For Wigston Poplars ED and Wigston South ED the LGBCE made some minor modifications to the proposal submitted by the County Council in that the

whole of Aylestone Lane is included in Wigston Poplars ED rather than Wigston South ED, and that Amesbury Road and Britford Avenue be included in Wigston South ED.

35. The LGBCE have also created a new two member division called Oadby South & Wigston East ED and this is made up of the following :-

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council wards of Oadby Brocks Hill, Oadby St Peter's, Oadby Woodlands and Wigston Meadowcourt together with the eastern part of Wigston All Saints ward and that part of Wigston St Wolstan's ward served by Wigston Road.

### **Comments of the Working Party**

36. The Working Party having considered the LGBCE's draft recommendations notes:-
- a) that the proposals are in the main in line with the proposals put forward by the County Council or a minor modification thereof.
  - b) that the focus of the LGBCE's modifications to the County Council's proposals appears to be achieving electoral equality and that the LGBCE appears to have given less weight in some of the redrawn divisions to the criteria relating to "the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities".
37. The Working Party therefore recommends the Constitution Committee to accept the recommendations of the LGBCE. In reaching its recommendation the Working Party was aware of concerns from a small number of elected members about the redrawn boundaries within their area. The Working Party was of the view that those members should be asked to take up their concerns direct with the LGBCE.

### **Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Implications**

38. The purpose of the review is to ensure that as far as possible each person's vote carries the same weight.

### **Recommendations**

39. That the LGBCE be advised that:-
- a) the County Council accepts the draft recommendations and wishes to make no comment or objections thereto.



- b) the County Council is aware that a small number of members have concerns regarding the detail about some of the redrawn boundaries and that those members will be making representation to the LGBCE directly.

### **Background Papers**

Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance April 2014

Leicestershire County Council submission on new electoral boundaries

Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Draft Recommendations

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