

**Report to: Council, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director - Planning and Governance**

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**Subject: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND:  
DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS  
FOR WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL**

## **1. Recommendation**

**1.1 Council agrees the Response set out in Appendix 1 as its collective response to the draft recommendations published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and authorises the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to submit this document to the Commission, on behalf of the Council.**

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE, The Commission) identified Worcester City Council as a local authority that requires a review of its electoral arrangements. The last review was completed in 2002. There is an evident level of electoral imbalance in two areas of the city which breach the acceptable 'levels of equality' endorsed by the LGBCE. This electoral inequality scenario becomes more acute when taking into account the electorate population forecast growth up to 2028 (the Commission's target date).
- 2.2 The review commenced in late 2021 and as part of the first stage of the review, the Council made a submission to the Commission in February 2022, as to the number of councillors that Worcester City Council should have. The Council submitted that the number of councillors should preferably remain at 35, although it would accept up to 39 Councillors if required. Simultaneously the Council resolved that it should change its electoral cycle from elections by thirds, to whole-Council elections.
- 2.3 One consequence of this decision to move to whole-council elections is that, for the purposes of the Commission's review, the number of councillors representing each ward in the city may be any number from 1 to 4, with 3 councillors typically being the highest number representing each ward.
- 2.4 The Commission has advised that it is minded to recommend that the Council size should be 35 councillors and so the review has moved to the second stage; to determine revised warding arrangements for the district, based upon 35 councillors.
- 2.5 At its July meeting, the Council agreed a draft submission on the warding pattern, supported by the leaders of its four Political Groups, ([Draft Warding submission Worcester City Council July 2022.pdf](#)). The submission was sent to the Commission in July 2022.

- 2.6 In early November 2022 the Commission produced proposals in the document "New electoral arrangements for Worcester City Council, Draft Recommendations, November 2022" ([Report - Worcester draft recommendations - cover.pdf](#)). The Commission's consultation on this document closes on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023
- 2.7 Following consultation with Leaders of the Council's four Political Groups the document at Appendix A to this report has been produced to set out the Council's response to these draft recommendations. This response is supported by all four of the Political Group Leaders.
- 2.8 It is understood that Political Groups and individual Councillors may also submit their own comments to the Commission.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The preferred option is to approve the draft response which is set out in **Appendix 1**. This has been prepared following discussions with the 4 Political Group Leaders as well as workshops with nominated group Members.
- 3.2 It should be noted that individual Members and Political Groups are also at liberty to make their own submissions directly to the Commission.
- 3.3 Because the Council operates a Committee system of governance and currently has no overall political control, officers propose that any Submission which is put before full Council should have the support of all 4 Political Group Leaders. This is to try to be consistent with the spirit of the Group Leaders protocol in the Constitution and avoid the scenario where a document submitted to the Commission which purports to be a "Council Submission" has only actually received a qualified endorsement through a majority vote at the Council meeting.
- 3.4 Overall, through the development of this Submission by officers and Members, there has been a good deal of consensus supporting the Commission's draft recommendations. All of the minor realignment of boundaries are supported.
- 3.5 More significant changes to realign the boundary between St Stephen and Rainbow Hill (which were proposed by the Council in its previous submission) are also supported, as are those relating to moving the Cherry Orchard area into Battenhall.
- 3.6 Whilst the Commission's recommendation to split Cathedral Ward differs slightly from that proposed by the Council, there is consensus supporting the Commission's alternative proposal.
- 3.7 Group Leaders have not reached a consensus on the Commission's recommendations to merge Gorse Hill and Warndon, and to move properties in the vicinity of Avon and Teme Road into Nunnery. The draft document at Appendix A makes it clear that the Council does not wish to submit a response regarding these specific recommendations.
- 3.8 Corporate/Policy Implications

None identified at this stage: if the Commission does ultimately recommend changes to the Council's warding patterns then the Council will need to prepare for these changes before they are adopted.

### 3.9 Equality Implications

No specific implications for equality, diversity and inclusion were identified in the preparation of this Submission, except to note that community identities were considered at a very localised level by officers and Members when reviewing warding arrangements.

### 3.10 Human Resources Implications

None identified.

### 3.11 Health and Safety Implications

None identified.

### 3.12 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The overall objective of the review of warding arrangements is to ensure electoral equality, which is intended to have a positive impact on individuals' satisfaction with local government representation.

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** **Warding Submission, Worcester City Council**  
[Draft Warding submission Worcester City Council July 2022.pdf](#)  
**New electoral arrangements for Worcester City Council, Draft Recommendations, November 2022, LGBCE,**  
[Report - Worcester draft recommendations - cover.pdf](#)

## **Appendix 1: Draft Council Submission**