

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL – 27TH JANUARY 2011

BOROUGH ELECTORAL REVIEW – SINGLE MEMBER WARDS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek the Council's support for the submission of an application, under Section 57 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (2009), to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) requesting that an Electoral Review be undertaken to consider the creation single member wards for the Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That an application be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) requesting that an Electoral Review be undertaken to consider, wherever possible, the creation of single member Borough wards;**
- 2.2 **That a politically balanced Boundary Review Committee be established at the Annual Meeting on the 23rd May 2011 in order to develop and agree proposals for consideration by Full Council.**

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council informed Members of his intention to write to the LGBCE, requesting a Borough Boundary Review at the 7 October Full Council meeting. He was proposing a reduction in the number of Borough councillors and the creation of, wherever possible, single member Borough wards. This request would be based on the basis of equality of representation across the Borough and convenient and effective local government. The Leader's initial view was that larger single member wards would strengthen the role of the elected member and provide a number of benefits: increased efficiency and reduced administration, cost savings on members' allowances, clearer accountability and clearer representation for the electors of the Borough. The recommendations of such a review would hopefully be implemented in time for the May 2015 local elections.
- 3.2 LGBCE has a threshold laid out within its general policies for triggering an electoral review. This is where electoral imbalances across wards have grown since the last periodic electoral review process took place, with either 30% of wards more than 10% from the average or one ward over 30% from the

average. Telford & Wrekin currently has 9 wards (27%) more than 10% from the average and one ward over 30% from the average. The recommendations of the last review were published in 2002.

- 3.3 LGBCE may conduct a review at the request of any authority which, as is the case with Telford & Wrekin, elects the whole Council every 4 years, and has resolved to move to a uniform pattern of single member wards or divisions across the authority. LGBCE, in conducting any such review, are required to consider the desirability of securing single member wards, assessing whether it is appropriate – taking in to account the statutory need to achieve good levels of electoral equality, reflect community identities and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government – that each ward should be represented by one councillor. There is nothing to prevent LGBCE from making other recommendations than single member wards.
- 3.4 LGBCE has, since the Leader first made his announcement written to the authority inviting it to consider its position in order to help it with its internal work planning. A copy of that letter is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.5 On receipt of an application from the authority the LGBCE will first of all decide whether to grant the Council’s request. If the request is granted the timetable for the review process is typically in four distinct stages.

Stage	Details	Approximate Length
Council Size Consultation	A short consultation on the total number of councillors to be elected	10 weeks
One	Consultation stage on electoral arrangements	12 weeks
Two	LGBCE’s deliberation based on submissions received	10-14 weeks
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on those recommendations	12 weeks
Four	LGBCE deliberation based on comments received on draft recommendations – formulation and publication of final recommendations	10-14 weeks

- 3.5 It is suggested that, should the request be approved, a politically balanced Boundary Committee be established in order to develop proposals, oversee the consultation process and make proposals for final consideration by Council.

4.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

Council, 7 October 2010, Minute 40

5.0 INFORMATION

5.1 Background

5.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament. Its main role is to conduct electoral reviews of local authorities in England, recommending whether changes should be made to electoral arrangements.

5.3 For the Borough Council the term Electoral arrangements means:

- Total number of councillors
- The number and boundaries of wards
- The number of councillors to be returned for any ward
- The name of any ward

5.4 The electoral arrangements of this Council are laid down in The Borough of Telford and Wrekin (Electoral Changes) Order 2002. The Order provides for 33 borough wards, allocating two councillors to 13 of the wards and three councillors to four wards. The remaining 16 wards are single-member wards, and the total number of councillors on the Council is presently 54.

5.5 The LGBCE also has the power to make consequential changes to the electoral arrangements of a Parish Council, where those arrangements are affected by changes to the electoral arrangements of the Borough. The Parishes, along with the Parish wards are the building blocks for the review of the Borough wards. There are 28 Parishes in the Borough, 26 with Councils which elect a total of 284 councillors. Every parish ward must lie wholly within a Borough ward and every unwarded parish must lie wholly within a Borough ward.

5.6 For Parish Councils the term Electoral Arrangements means:

- Grouping Parishes under a common council
- Total number of councillors on the parish council
- Whether to divide the parish in to parish wards
- The boundaries of the wards
- The number of councillors to be returned for each parish ward
- The name of any parish ward

5.7 The LGBCE generally conduct electoral reviews where electoral imbalances across wards have grown since the last periodic electoral review process took place, with either 30% of wards more than 10% from the average or one ward over 30% from the average. The current average for the authority is 2,248 electors per Borough ward. 9 of the 33 Borough wards are more than 10%

from the average (Brookside, Church Aston & Lilleshall, Dothill, Ercall, Hadley and Leegomery, Haygate, Horsehay & Lightmoor, Lawley & Overdale and Wrockwardine Wood & Trench) and one Borough ward (Horsehay & Lightmoor) is 30% from the average.

5.8 Equality & Diversity

There are no immediate equal opportunities implications in this Review.

5.9 Environmental Impact

There are no implications.

5.10 Legal Comment

Under section 57 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 the Council can request that a review of electoral arrangements be undertaken in accordance with section 56 (2)(a) and Schedule 2 to the same Act.

5.11 Links with Corporate Priorities

This report links to the Community Priorities for the creation of safe, strong and cohesive communities and for an efficient, community focussed Council.

5.12 Opportunities and Risks

The opportunities and risks associated with any changes to ward boundaries have been identified and assessed. Arrangements will be put in place to manage the risks and maximise the opportunities that have been identified.

5.13 Financial Implications

5.13.1 There are no direct costs associated with LGBCE conducting an Electoral Review, however it is likely that support will be required for the review from officers within Democratic Services. It is anticipated that costs relating to any form of consultation process as part of the review will be minimal. The cost of officer time involved in the review and costs of the consultation process will be contained within existing budgets.

5.13.2 There are significant ongoing savings to the Council should the LGBCE recommend that the number of wards are reduced by around 25%. From 54 to 40 councillors representing single member wards. The saving in the basic allowance for 14 members is £110k based on the 2010/11 members allowance rates. This figure could increase as high as £135k taking into account other associated costs and allowances such as National Insurance, pension contributions, member development, mobile phones, subsistence and mileage. There will also be administrative savings within Democratic Services from supporting a fewer number of members and from the administration of elections as a result of having fewer wards.

6.0 **WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Borough wide.

7.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Electoral Reviews: technical guidance (April 2010).

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