

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Democracy and Standards Committee 20 October 2022

Report Title	Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Pattern Submission
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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Ward Pattern Submission for West Northamptonshire Area

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Democracy and Standards Committee to agree the draft ward pattern submission for submission to Full Council on 3rd November 2022. The submission was prepared on behalf of the Committee by a cross-party working group, which has been meeting to consider draft proposals for the ward pattern submission as part of the second stage of review of electoral arrangements in West Northamptonshire.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note that this report makes recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on ward numbers, sizes, geography and names. The submission has been prepared on the invitation of the LGBCE, who are undertaking a public consultation on the above issues. The LGBCE will consider all responses received and publish a proposal for further consultation on 7 February 2023. Change to the electoral arrangements will take effect for the next ordinary election of councillors in May 2025.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The LGBCE are undertaking an electoral review of West Northamptonshire Council. This process requires the LGBCE to seek representations to assist it in formulating revised arrangements.
- 2.2 Under the terms of the Council's constitution, the Democracy and Standards Committee has responsibility for boundary reviews and with support from officers, the committee established a cross-party working group to formulate and consider recommendations for electoral arrangements for West Northamptonshire.
- 2.3 The Working Group met a number of times and reported back to the Committee with proposals concerning council size earlier this year. The Committee recommended a council size range of 77 to 82 Councillors. The Council approved this submission at its meeting on 30 June 2022. The LGBCE advised the Council that it is minded to recommend a council size of 77; a reduction of 16 councillors from present.
- 2.4 The Working Group has met a number of times since then and this report recommends a draft submission to the Committee, for consideration and onward submission to Full Council. The proposal, which is set out at Appendix 1 of this report, makes a recommendation to the LGBCE as to the number of wards, their boundaries and the number of councillors who should represent each ward, within the LGBCE's previously defined number (77).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Notes the work of the cross-party working group on the second phase of electoral arrangements for West Northamptonshire;
 - b) Approves the document set out at Appendix A for submission to Full Council, with a recommendation that it be approved for submission to the LGBCE; and
 - c) Delegates authority to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chair of the Democracy and Standards Committee to make any amendments to the proposed submission to the LGBCE and to finalise the submission in light of any comments from this committee prior to submission to Full Council.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To update the Committee on the work carried out by the working and to agree the submission be referred to Full Council and for onward submission to the LGBCE. The Democracy and Standards Committee, through the working group it established, will be required considered in some detail the options available to the Council in relation to ward patterns and sizes.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The LGBCE is responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements through electoral reviews. Each review is divided into stages. The last stage related to councillor numbers. The next stage is a public consultation and the Council, as a consultee, is invited to submit a proposal for ward patterns. At the conclusion of the consultation a proposal will be put

forward for further consultation by the LGBCE, taking account of evidence supplied by the Council as well as any other respondents who have made a representation.

- 5.2 The document included at Appendix A sets out factual and contextual information about the Council, together with information regarding proposals for ward patterns that take account of the statutory criteria applicable to electoral reviews, namely:
- 5.2.1 The new pattern of wards should mean that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the authority.
 - 5.2.2 Ward patterns should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable.
 - 5.2.3 The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the council.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The working group have considered the implications for the Council of a range of possible ward patterns.
- 6.2 It is recommended that the Committee approves the recommended pattern of wards set out in the submission document set out at Appendix A for consideration by Full Council. The only other option open to the Council would be to not submit a view about ward patterns to the LGBCE, but this is not recommended.
- 6.3 It should also be noted that political groups, individuals, members of the public and other interested parties may also submit proposals and evidence to the LGBCE for consideration.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of the review process. The resource requirements of the next stage of the review will be met from within the West Northamptonshire staffing structure. Technical expertise required for the gathering of statistical information, mapping and forecasting will be met from existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 The Democracy and Standards Committee has delegated authority for the preparation of submissions in relation to boundary reviews. The Committee established a cross-party working group to assist it in the formulation of proposals. The statutory responsibility for determining the new pattern of wards sits with Parliament on the recommendations of the LGBCE. The LGBCE will consult on their proposals before reaching their final conclusions and recommending these by draft statutory order to Parliament.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There are no significant risks associated with the proposal. If the Council did not provide a submission as part of the consultation process there is a risk that the new pattern of boundaries would not reflect communities and would be difficult for members to serve their communities because of the disjointed nature of the constituencies. It may also mean that there are issues for local governance and electoral administration. These risks are avoided if comprehensive comments are made to the LGBCE to ensure that they have the full information about West Northamptonshire before drawing up proposals.

7.4 **Consultation**

7.4.1 Formal consultation on the next stage of the review will be conducted by the LGBCE as part of the review process.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 This is a submission document and the Council has no direct decision making in relation to the substantive decision, and it is therefore not suitable for scrutiny. Members of Scrutiny were encouraged alongside all members to submit evidence to inform the draft submission.

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 There is no climate impact to consider in relation to the recommendation.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 The primary objective of the review is to improve electoral equality across West Northamptonshire ensuring that each voter has roughly the same representation on the council and to ensure the pattern of wards reflects local communities. Citizens will also have the opportunity to engage with the review process and submit their own proposals and comment on recommendations as part of the review process.

8. **Background Papers**

8.1 Democracy and Standards Committee – 16 June 2022:

[Agenda for Democracy and Standards Committee on Thursday 16th June 2022, 6.00 pm - West Northamptonshire Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

8.2 Democracy and Standards Committee – 30 September 2021:

[Agenda for Democracy and Standards Committee on Thursday 30th September 2021, 6.00 pm - West Northamptonshire Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)