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Date: 4th April 2023



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Dear Paul

In response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Consultation on the proposed warding arrangements for Wokingham Borough Council, the Council has agreed the attached formal response.

The Council established a Cross Party Working Group to consider in detail the LGBCE proposals and formulate the response on behalf of the Council. On most areas the Cross Party Working Group was able to reach consensus. There were two areas where the group could not achieve unanimity and we have reflected those areas within our response. We have outlined cases for both options but felt that it was important to provide context on which proposal was supported by the majority of the Working Group. Both areas of disagreement are independent of each other.

At its meeting on the 23rd March the Full Council resolved to adopt the attached consultation response and submit it on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council.

If you need further explanation on any aspect of the submission then please do not hesitate to contact Paul.Ohsan.Ellis@wokingham.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive



APPENDIX 1

Wokingham Borough Council response to the LGBCE Proposals Published on 31 January 2023

The Council established a cross party electoral review working group (ERWG) in February 2022 to lead the Council's engagement on the LGBCE's electoral review. The working group met throughout the process to undertake the detailed work in providing a set of proposals for Council. On the 31 January 2023 the Commission published its proposal. The ERWG met on the 15 February to consider the proposals and draft the Council's response. The group has sought to establish consensus on the proposals. Where consensus was not possible, we have outlined the different views of the group.

The Council has endorsed this response at its meeting on the 23 March 2023 and wishes to recognise the minority view expressed in the ERWG.

The Council welcomes the Commission's proposals for the Borough and believes that they provide a good reflection of the 3 criteria:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

Warding Arrangements

The ERWG was strongly supportive of the Commission's proposals for:

- Northern
- Woodley (North, East and South)
- Winnersh
- Wokingham (Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott)
- Earley (North, South West and South East)
- Shinfield
- Arborfield with Barkham
- Finchampstead
- Wokingham Without

The Council reiterates the arguments for these wards as set out in the original submission.

The Council supports the Commission's proposals for the adjustments to the wards:

- Extension of the Arborfield and Barkham boundary to the south to the Borough boundary
- Hartigan Place in Woodley moves to North Woodley
- Ryhill Way in Shinfield moves to Earley
- Ryeish Green in Shinfield moves to Southern

- Adjustment of the Emmbrook – Wescott boundary to the centre of Earle Crescent

The ERWG could not reach consensus on the following wards:

- Twyford and Hurst
- Southern

The Majority view supported the Commission's proposals that three member wards would best support the review's objectives. The Minority view was that a two member and one member warding arrangement would more accurately reflect the community identity of these areas. The detailed arguments for each of these views are detailed in the Council's original submission.

Ward Naming

The Council made the following comments on the names for wards:

The ERWG supports the naming of wards proposed by the Commission for:

- Winnersh
- Wokingham (Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott)
- Shinfield
- Arborfield with Barkham
- Finchampstead
- Wokingham Without

The Council notes the suggestion in the consultation that 'Wokingham Without' be named 'Pinewood'. The Council strongly supports 'Wokingham Without' given the alignment with the Parish Council and the long history of the current name.

The ERWG gave consideration to the naming convention and would suggest the following:

- Northern changed to 'Thames Ward'
- Twyford and Hurst changed to 'Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst'
- North Woodley changed to 'Bulmershe and Coronation'
- East Woodley changed to 'Loddon'
- South Woodley changed to 'South Lake'
- North Earley changed to 'Maiden Erlegh and Whitegates'
- South East Earley changed to 'Hawkedon'
- South West Earley changed to 'Hillside'
- Southern changed to 'Spencer's Wood and Swallowfield'

Town and Parish Council Arrangements

The Council did not take a view on the proposed electoral arrangements for Town and Parish Councils. We believe that the warding arrangements for the Towns and Parish

Councils are principally a matter for them and that they are best placed to make representations to the Commission.

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TITLE	Council Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 March 2023
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive - Susan Parsonage

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is the independent body that is responsible for deciding the boundaries between the wards of Wokingham borough. It is reviewing Wokingham borough to make sure councillors represent about the same number of electors, and that ward arrangements help the council work effectively. It wants to be sure that its proposals reflect community ties and identities.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) as recommended by the Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG) and set out at Appendix 1.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

A new pattern of wards is being developed for Wokingham Borough Council.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body accountable to Parliament. It recommends fair electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities in England. In doing so, it aims to:

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors
- Reflect the electoral cycle so that each ward is represented by three councillors
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances

On the 31 January the LGBCE published its proposal for a new warding pattern in Wokingham. [Microsoft Word - Wokingham DR report - FINAL](#) The Commission is running a consultation on these proposals until the 10 April 2023.

The ERWG has reviewed the Commission's proposal and drafted the submission on behalf of the Council. The proposed response largely supports the Commission's proposals. The ERWG could not reach a consensus on the issue of three member wards for the Twyford and Hurst and Southern ward arrangement and this response reflects this.

The LGBCE's final recommendations are due to be published on 4 July 2023. Changes will come into effect from May 2024 when all 54 seats will be elected.

Background

At its meeting of 17 February 2022, Council received an update on the LGBCE review and agreed to set up a cross-party Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG).

On the 24 March 2022, the Council agreed the Phase 1 submission on the number of Councillors as 54 Members. On the 30 August 2022, the LGBCE supported this proposal and launched their consultation on warding arrangements on this basis. The consultation ran until the 7 November 2022.

The Council submitted its warding proposals following approval by Council on the 20 October 2022.

The LGBCE published its proposal for new warding patterns in Wokingham on the 31 January 2023. The consultation is open to anyone to submit a response prior to the deadline on the 17 April 2023.

The ERWG met on the 15 February 2023 to discuss the Council's response, work through the options and agree the Council's draft response set out in Appendix 1.

LGBCE Timeline

Stage/Action	Timescale
Preliminary Period Informal dialogue with local authority. Focus on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data. Commissioner-level involvement in briefing group leaders on issue of Council size. Meetings also held with officers, group leaders, and members.	June 2021 to February 2022
Phase 1 - Council size submission Deadline for submission by Council of proposals on Council size for the Commission to consider.	25 March 2022
Phase 1 - Council size decision LGBCE analyses submissions from local authority and/or political groups on Council size and takes a "minded to" decision on Council size.	25 March to July 2022
Formal start of Review Consultation on future warding arrangements LGBCE publishes its initial conclusions on Council size. General invitation to submit warding proposals based on LGBCE's conclusions on Council size.	August to November 2022

Development of draft recommendations Analysis of all representations received. LGBCE reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations.	December 2022 to January 2023
Consultation on draft recommendations Publication by LGBCE of draft recommendations and public consultation on them.	31 January 2023 to 10 April 2023
Final recommendations Analysis of all representations received. LGBCE reaches conclusions on its final recommendations and publishes.	4 July 2023
Order made Statutory Instrument approved.	Average likely to be 4 months from being laid i.e. November 2023
New arrangements come into place for elections on	2 May 2024

The Submission

The Electoral Review Working Group has agreed this response to the Commission's proposals. The ERWG was able to unanimously support the Commission in all wards except for "Twyford and Hurst" and "Southern" ward. The majority supported the Commission's proposals but a minority view felt that both these areas better represented their communities with a two / one member ward arrangement. We have provided both options to the LGBCE.

Ward Naming

The Commission have proposed names for each of the wards. The ERWG felt that the retention of existing warding names should be retained and have suggested that these replace the proposals.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None.

Cross-Council Implications
The Electoral Review will result in all-out local borough elections in May 2024 which will be a significant event requiring careful planning and delivery with support from services across the Council.

Public Sector Equality Duty
The outcome of the Review will determine the number of councillors for the Borough as well as both the number of wards and ward boundaries, allowing for the most effective representation of the Borough's diverse communities.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
There are no specific impacts of this decision on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers
Appendix A

Contact Andrew Moulton, Paul Ohsan Ellis	Service Governance
Telephone No Tel: 07747 777298	Email andrew.moulton@wokingham.gov.uk, paul.ohsan.ellis@wokingham.gov.uk

Wokingham

Personal Details:

Name:

[REDACTED]

Email:

[REDACTED]

Postcode:

[REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Wokingham Borough Council (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Hi Paul

Please find attached the Wokingham Borough Council response to your Consultation on the warding proposals for Wokingham Borough.

This was approved at the Full Council meeting on the 23rd March. Agenda for Council on Thursday, 23rd March, 2023, 7.30 pm - Wokingham Borough Council (modern.gov.co.uk) item 123.

Any queries please let me know.

Regards

Paul

Attached Documents:

- Council Submission to LGBCE Consultation Cover Report Council.pdf
- WBC Consultation Response LGBCE Covering Letter.pdf
- WBC Response LGBCE Consultation Final.pdf