SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Extraordinary Council

DATE: 11th April 2022

REPORT OF: Electoral Cycle & Parliamentary Boundary Review Working Group

(For all Enquiries) Clerk to the Working Group
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WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR DECISION

RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND CONSULTATION ON THE ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The Council agreed on 18th January 2022 to move to whole Council elections from 2023 and to request that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) conduct an electoral review for the purpose of designing a pattern of wards consistent with the move to whole Council elections.

1.2 The LGBCE launched their electoral review of Slough on 1st February 2022 with an initial 10-week consultation which closes on 11th April 2022. A second consultation on the LGBCE proposals will be carried in the summer of 2022 with the new warding arrangements coming into effect for the 2023 borough elections.

1.3 This report sets out the recommendations of the Electoral Cycle & Parliamentary Boundary Review Working Group which proposes the Council responds to the review in order to try to secure warding arrangements which reflect Slough's communities and identities and meet the LGBCE review criteria.

2. Recommendations

Council is requested to resolve that delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to submit a Council response to the LGBCEs first consultation on its electoral review of Slough as set out in section 5 of this report and which specifically proposes:

(a) That the number of wards of Slough Borough Council be proposed to be 21.

(b) That the boundaries between the wards be proposed to be those set out in Appendix B, noting that the LGBCE will conduct a second round of consultation following publication of its draft proposals for Slough on 5th July 2022.

(c) That the names of each new ward be those proposed in paragraph 5.9.

(d) That the number of councillors elected to each ward be 2.

Comments of the Commissioners

"The Commissioners endorse the comments made to the working group as set out in para 5.13 of the report."

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA

3a. Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Good governance arrangements will support all of the Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities and the JSNA.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

4.1 The cost of running a 'whole' Council election is estimated to be £210k. The warding pattern is not expected to have any significant financial impact and the costs can therefore be met within approved budgets.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score	Future Controls
Council is requested to resolve that delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to submit a Council response to the LGBCEs first consultation on its electoral review of Slough which states: (a) That the number of wards of Slough Borough Council be proposed to be 21. (b) That the boundaries between the wards be proposed as set out in Appendix B, noting that the LGBCE will conduct a second round of consultation following publication of its draft proposals for Slough on 5th July 2022.	Risk that any new warding arrangements agreed by LGBCE do not reflect Slough's community interests and identities	Existing ward boundaries have been in place since 2014	Likelihood – Very Low – 2 Impact – Negligible – 2 Risk Score - 4	Enhanced and strengthened governance and democratic accountability. The Council will conduct a review of polling districts and polling places to implement the outcomes of the LGBCE review.

(c) That the names of each new ward be those proposed in paragraph 5.9. (d) That the number of councillors elected to each ward by 2.				

(c) Legal Implications

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the requirements for a review of electoral arrangements carried out by the LGBCE.

The review procedure is prescribed at Section 58 of the Act which requires the LGBCE to inform interested parties to a review and take their representations into consideration.

Section 58: Review procedure
(1) As soon as reasonably practicable after deciding to conduct a review under section 56, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of—

(a) the fact that the review is to take place, and
(b) any particular matters to which the review is to relate.

(2) In conducting a review under section 56, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must—

(a) prepare and publish draft recommendations,
(b) take such steps as its considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them and of the period within which representations with respect to them may be made, and
(c) take into consideration any representations made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England within that period.

(3) The Local Government Boundary Commission for England may at any time before publishing draft recommendations under subsection (2)(a) consult such persons as it considers appropriate.

(4) As soon as practicable after conducting a review under section 56, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must—

(a) publish a report stating its recommendations, and
(b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for an EIA at this stage.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 On 18th January 2022 the Council agreed to move to change the electoral cycle to whole council elections from 2023. This was in accordance with the advice provided on behalf of the Secretary of State at the time Directions were made under sections 15 (5) and 15 (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 and the appointment of Commissioners.

5.2 The Directions strongly recommended an early move to whole council elections; and to work closely with the Commissioners in the process. In January 2022 the Lead Commissioner had given his view that that the change to whole council elections should be accompanied by a revised pattern of wards, meaning that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) should be requested to conduct an electoral review at the earliest opportunity. Following the agreement of Council in January 2022 the LGBCE agreed to commence such a review which was launched on 1st February 2022.

5.3 The scope of a LGBCE electoral review considers the electoral arrangements for a local authority in respect of the:

- Number of councillors;
- Number of wards;
- Boundaries between wards;
- Names of each ward; and
- Number of councillors elected to each ward.

5.4 Phase 1 of a review relates to Councillor numbers. In line with the Council Size Submission approved by the Council on 18th January and submitted to LGBCE that SBC continue to have 42 councillors. The LGBCE are minded to agree this figure.

5.5 Phase 2 of the review is the warding arrangements and the LGBCE timetable for Slough is as follows:

- First consultation on warding arrangements – 1st February to 11th April 2022.
- Consultation on the draft LGBCE proposals – 5th July to 12th September 2022.
- Publication of final proposals – 29th November 2022 (or later if further consultation is required).

5.6 The LGBCE make it clear that effective representatives to the consultation will have to address their three statutory criteria:

- Electoral equality – new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of voters as other councillors elsewhere in the authority.
- Community identities and interests – new wards should, as far as possible, reflect community identities and interests, and boundaries should be identifiable e.g. transport links, community groups and facilities, natural or physical boundaries, parishes and shared interests.

- Effective and convenient local government – new wards should promote "effective and convenient" local government i.e. the number of councillors for, the geographic size of, and the links between part of the ward.

5.7 A LGBCE review cannot consider political consequences, parliamentary boundaries, house prices or insurance, postcodes or addresses. The Commission expects that effective responses be evidence based. Electoral equality is a particularly important factor in this regard as it is the only criteria that can be measured with precision.

SBCs Working Group position

5.8 Following discussions between and within groups on the outline of a Council submission to the consultation for a proposal based on 21 x 2 member wards, the Council's Electoral Cycle and Parliamentary Boundary Review Working Group met on 6th April 2022 to consider a response.

5.9 The Working Group considered a detailed set of draft proposals for 21 wards each with 2 members. The proposals had been designed to meet the criteria of the LGBCE as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report. The proposed new wards would be as follows:

- Baylis
- Britwell
- Slough Central
- Chalvey Grove
- Chalvey and Salt Hill
- Cippenham Green
- Cippenham Meadows
- Colnbrook and Poyle
- Elliman
- Farnham
- Haymill
- Herschel Park
- Langley Foxborough
- Langley Marish
- Langley Meads
- Langley St Mary's
- Manor Park and Stoke
- Northborough and Lynch Hill Valley
- Upton
- Upton Lea
- Wexham Court

(note – all proposed new wards have new or revised boundaries, even where existing ward names are retained)

5.10 Maps were presented that explained the rationale for each new ward, the changes from the existing ward boundaries and the present and projected future number of electors. These figures were crucial to the submission, and any change or amendment would need to be in accordance with LGBCE criteria on electoral equality.

5.11 The Working Group supported the overall proposals for 21 x 2 member wards and agreed to recommend the proposal to Council on 11th April 2022, subject to noting and resolving the following:

- New Haymill ward – it was noted current ward councillors had expressed a preference for Phipps Road, Blumfield Crescent and Blumfield Court to be in the new Haymill ward rather than the current proposal that they be in the Northborough Lynch Hill Valley Ward. The Working Group discussed a number of alternatives, although it was recognised it would different to reach an alternative proposal that met the LGBCE criteria for both electoral equality and clear boundaries. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to alternatives prior to Council. It was agreed that the proposal could be issued in a Council report and if an alternative proposal came forward it could be debated and determined via an amendment at the Council meeting. Any amendment would need to meet the LGBCE criteria. It was also noted that this was the first stage of consultation and a second round would be held from 5th July 2022 on the draft LGBCE proposal.

- The rationale for extending the Colnbrook with Poyle ward boundary to include some properties north of the M4 was discussed. The existing ward boundary did not include sufficient electors to meet the LGBCE criteria, therefore additional properties would need to be added. Various options were considered, but the hard boundary of M4 limited viable options. The proposed properties as set out in Appendix B were agreed to be included as they were the best fit given the criteria and there were established links with Colnbrook such as highway, footway and public transport connections and the fact the area was in the catchment for the schools in Colnbrook.

- The Working Group agreed the Langley Kedermister or Marish ward be proposed to be called Langley Marish; and that Langley Foxborough or Horsemoor Green be proposed to be called Langley Foxborough.

- That the ward map for Central issued to the Working Group on 6th April included an error that would be corrected to confirm that the southern boundary was the High Street all the way to Bath Road.

5.12 The Working Group agreed that further work take place to finalise the Council's submission ahead of Council, and that the provide the necessary evidence required by the Boundary Review it should include:

- A set of 21 proposed ward maps clearly showing the new boundaries.
- One key map showing the warding pattern across the town.
- A schedule of elector numbers for the proposed pattern of ward (1st April figures, variations and %; forecast elector numbers with a forecast variation and %).
- Any amendment would have to provide similar information to enable it to be considered.

5.13 The Lead Commissioner attended the meeting and provided his view on the proposals. He commented that the 21-ward pattern each with 2 members appeared to be the most effective pattern for the Council as a whole. The proposals as set out provided effective boundaries that met the LGBCEs criteria.

Proposed submission

5.14 The Council is therefore requested to approve the proposed submission of Slough Borough Council to the first consultation of the LGBCE as set out in this report which in summary is as follows:

- Number of wards – 21
- Boundaries between wards – as shown in Appendix B
- Names of each ward – as per paragraph 5.9 and Appendix A
- Number of councillors elected to each ward – 2 for each ward

6. Comments of Other Committees

This proposal has been developed by the Member Working Group on the Electoral Cycle and Parliamentary Boundary Review on 6th April 2022.

7. Conclusion

The Council is requested to consider the recommendations of the Working Group, and if agreed, delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to submit the proposal to the LGBCE by 11th April 2022.

8. Appendices

'A' Statistical Analysis of Proposed New Wards

'B' Proposed New Ward Maps

'C' Proposed new ward profiles summaries