

Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Electoral Review

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Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder	N/A as report of The Chief Executive
Corporate Priority:	All
Relevant Ward Member(s):	All
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 To notify members in relation to the timetable and next steps for the electoral review to be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

2 Recommendations

That Council:

- 2.1 **Note the next steps and timetable for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of Melton Borough Council as set out in the report and Appendix A.**
- 2.2 **Note the Constitution Review Working Group (as the appropriate Cross Party Working Group) will develop the Council's submissions in relation to the review, such submissions to be approved by Council before being formally provided to the LGBCE.**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure the Council is provided with early notification of the forthcoming review, the indicative timetable and has the appropriate governance in place to prepare and submit the necessary information to the LGBCE.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has indicated that it intends to conduct an electoral review of Melton Borough Council.
- 4.2 The LGBCE is the independent body responsible for determining the electoral arrangements of local authorities across England.
- 4.3 The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.
- 4.4 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the duty placed on the Commission to undertake an electoral review of every principal local authority in England 'from time to time'. The last electoral review of Melton Borough Council was undertaken in 2002. Accordingly, the Commission considers that a review of this authority should take place in time to be implemented at the election in 2027.

5 Main Considerations - The Electoral Review Process

- 5.1 The first decision the Commission will take is how many councillors the Council would have. They will invite the Council (and groups on the council) to make proposals for how many members the Council believes there should be in the future.
- 5.2 Once the Commission decides on the total number of councillors, the next step will be the 'warding pattern' part of the process which starts with a full public consultation where the Council as well as the wider electorate, including community groups, parish/town councils and members of the public will be asked for their views on where the ward boundaries should be.
- 5.3 The LGBCE will then publish its draft recommendations which they will consult on again.
- 5.4 The publication of their final recommendations marks the end of the review process.
- 5.5 The LGBCE will then lay an Order in Parliament and seek to do so no later than the Autumn preceding the May election. The new electoral arrangements will be implemented at an 'all out' election on the ordinary day of elections in 2027.

Stages for Electoral Reviews

- 5.6 The various stages of an electoral review as set out in the table below:

	Stage	Action	Duration
1	Preliminary Period	Informal dialogues with the Council. Focus on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral date town/parish councils.	Up to 6 months in advance of the formal start of the review

		Commissioner-level briefing of group leaders and officers	17 th July 2023
		Commissioner-level briefing of all members	September 2023
		Constitutional Review Working Group to consider options and make a recommendation to Council on size of the Council post 2027.	By December 2023
		At the end of this process, the Council and its political groups will submit their council size proposals and 5 year population projections for the Commission to consider	By April 2024
2	Council Size Discussion	Commission analyses submissions from the council and /or political groups on council size and takes a 'minded to' decision on council size	5 weeks
Formal Start of Review			
3	Consultation on future warding / division arrangements	The Commission publishes its initial conclusions on council size. General invitation to submit warding/division proposals based on the Commissions conclusions on council size	12 weeks
4	Development of the draft recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations	12 weeks
5	Consultation on draft recommendations	Publication of draft recommendations and public consultation on them	8 weeks
6	Further consultation (if required)	Further consultation only takes place where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations and where it lacks sufficient evidence of local views in relation to those changes	Up to 5 weeks
	Development of final recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its final recommendations	12 weeks

5.7 Time periods shown are the expected typical duration of stages. They are not standards or undertakings.

5.8 The progress of a review will be determined by the nature of the issues to be addressed and the availability of information to underpin sound decision-making, not by a determination to complete a review within any given period.

Preliminary Period

- 5.9 Each review will generally start with a preliminary period during which time the LGBCE will meet with the local authority and interested parties to explain the review process and enable them to prepare the information they will need for the review.
- 5.10 In this stage they will work with members and local authority officers and their key partners to gather information regarding the following:
- 5.10.1 details of current electoral arrangements and the current electoral register;
 - 5.10.2 identification of parishes and their boundaries;
 - 5.10.3 other indicators which identify and build up a map of communities;
 - 5.10.4 five-year electorate forecasts from the planned end of the review.
- 5.11 They will also need to gain a clear understanding of the extent and nature of communities and the linkages between them and explore the way in which councils and councillors aim to work effectively with their communities in order to understand council size proposals.
- 5.12 The preliminary period normally ends with the submission of proposals on council size by the council under review and/or the political party groupings represented on the council, as well as any other council size submissions received.

The Role of the Council

- 5.13 There are two main areas of work for the Council in the preliminary period:
- 5.13.1 Preparing electorate forecasts, mapping and details of housing developments.
The Council will need to provide five-year electorate forecasts broken down to polling district level. This reflects the statutory duty to consider forecasts five years from the end of the review.
 - 5.13.2 Submission of proposal/representation in relation to council size.

Proposal on Council Size

- 5.14 Council size is the starting point in any electoral review since it determines the average number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards or divisions of the authority. The LGBCE cannot consider the patterns of wards or divisions without knowing the optimum number of electors per councillor, which is derived from dividing the electorate by the number of councillors to be elected to the authority.
- 5.15 Broadly speaking, the LGBCE will take a view on the right council size for an authority by considering three areas:
- the governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities, and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
 - the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies, and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
 - the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.
- 5.16 Regardless of whether a change is proposed or not the Council's submission must be justified and supported by evidence.

- 5.17 After consideration of the evidence submitted by an authority the LGBCE will announce the council size which they believe to provide the appropriate basis for the preparation of warding proposals.

Warding Arrangements

- 5.18 The second stage of the review concerns warding arrangements. The council size will be used to determine the average(optimum) number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. This number is reached by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors on the authority.
- 5.19 Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act sets out the statutory criteria to which the LGBCE are required to have regard in conducting electoral reviews. In broad terms, in making recommendations, they are required to have regard to:
- the need to secure equality of representation;
 - the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - the need to secure effective and convenient local government
- 5.20 The review will also consider number of councillors to be elected for each ward/division; and the name of any ward/division.
- 5.21 The Council will be invited to make representations/proposals in relation to warding proposals and may also wish to respond to the LGBCE consultation in draft recommendations.

Proposed Timescales

- 5.22 The LGBCE has provided the Council with the attached indicative timetable (Appendix A)
- 5.23 It is envisaged the process will commence in July 2023 and be completed by Summer 2025 in readiness for implementation for the elections in May 2027.

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 None – the Council must comply with the requirements of the LGBCE in carrying out the electoral review.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 The electoral review will impact on all Councillors and all communities within Melton. To maximise participation for Councillors, residents and all relevant stakeholder groups it will be important to ensure a thorough consultation exercise is undertaken.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

- 8.1 A Member Briefing will be arranged with LGBCE Review Officers to provide further information on the process. This is likely to be arranged for September/October 2023, date to be confirmed.
- 8.2 Preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data to be provided to the LGBCE.
- 8.3 Constitution Review Working Group to prepare a submission on Council Size to be provided to Council for approval before formal submission to the LGBCE.
- 8.4 The Council's submission on Council size to be approved by Council before formal submission to the LGBCE.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 There will be some resource implications relating to officer time to prepare the necessary statistical and other information and develop and implement a communication and engagement strategy. This will be contained within existing budgets.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services

10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 The proposed electoral review is a statutory process instigated by the LGBCE and driven by their timetable and requirements. The Council has no choice but to support and provide a significant amount of information for the review to ensure that the outcomes are in the best interests of the people of Melton.
- 10.2 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) is the main piece of legislation under which electoral reviews are undertaken.
- 10.3 Section 56 of the 2009 Act requires that the LGBCE review 'from time to time' every principal local authority in England and make recommendations about electoral arrangements (but not their external boundaries).
- 10.4 The Terms of Reference for the Constitution Review Working Group incorporate the function of reviewing arrangements, reports and recommendations arising from Boundary and Community Governance Reviews. It is therefore proposed that this Working Group is the appropriate body for receiving regular updates regarding the review and preparing submissions for Council approval before formal submission to the LGBCE by the relevant deadlines.

Legal Implications reviewed by: **Interim Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy**

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

12 Community Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 13.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications arising from this report.

14 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failure to meet the deadlines for submission of the Council's representations on council size and warding arrangements.	Low	Critical	Medium Risk

Risk No	Mitigation
1	A timetable and project plan will be prepared to incorporate all work required and relevant deadlines.

15 Background Papers

Technical Guidance June 2023: https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/technical-guidance-june_2023.pdf

16 Appendices

16.1 Appendix A – Indicative Timetable