



## Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England Consultation

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<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Councillor Margaret Glancy</b> - Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader)

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Right conditions to support delivery & engaging and connected Council
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	16 August 2024
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 To consider and agree the Council's response to the public consultation on changes to the ward boundaries for Melton Borough Council.

### 2 Recommendations

#### That Council:

- 2.1 **Notes the process which applies to reviews of ward boundaries for local authorities and the criteria on which they are based;**
- 2.2 **Considers the draft response to the current Public Consultation being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE);**
- 2.3 **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to finalise and submit the Council's response to the Commission in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Review Working Group; and,**

2.4 **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to correct any minor errors in the electorate figures prior to submission.**

### **3 Reason for Recommendations**

3.1 To ensure that the Council has an opportunity to influence the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) decision in relation to any changes made to the Council's ward boundaries.

### **4 Background**

4.1 In December 2021 the Council received a report informing it of the forthcoming review of the Council's ward boundaries by the LGBCE. The report can be found at: [Committee](#). That report included the LGBCE's illustrative timetable for the stages of the review (see paragraph 5.18) this stage of which commenced in late 2023. Any changes made to boundaries take effect when the Council next holds 'full elections' in May 2027.

4.2 The 2021 report to Council also set out the distinct stages in which the Council will participate in the process which are summarised as:

- (a) Preparing electorate forecasts, mapping and details of housing developments, including 5-year electorate forecasts broken down to polling district level (there is a statutory duty to consider forecasts 5 years from the end of the review).
- (b) Preparing and submitting a warding pattern during the first public consultation and responding to the LGBCE's draft recommendations.
- (c) Supporting the LGBCE in publicising the review including sharing details of interested parties and supporting meetings with community and residents' groups.

4.3 The Council previously considered the first stage and prepared a forecast for the LGBCE, following which the LGBCE responded with an electorate forecast for 2030, on which warding patterns are to be based. The electorate forecast for 2030 is set at: 46,826, based on which the LGBCE states that it will not be proposing changing the number of Councillors for the Borough, i.e. there will still be 28 members. Since that stage of the process is completed, there is limited scope for any changes to the number of Councillors for the Borough.

4.4 The LGBCE did however, indicate that the growth of the Borough's electorate will create and/or accentuate variances between the number of electors which each Councillor represents, therefore potentially creating an imbalance in their roles. To illustrate this, if the forecast for 2030 were split evenly each Councillor would represent 1,672 electors however, if the existing ward patterns were to remain at that time, some wards will contain significantly more than this number and others significantly less.

4.5 To summarise, those wards which would contain plus or minus of 10% or more of the electoral average are likely to require changes. That is not to say that consequential changes cannot be made to other wards to create appropriate boundaries to reflect community ties and identities. The overriding principles are that each member should represent a broadly similar number of electors and any changes to ward boundaries should be informed by local needs, views and circumstances.

4.6 When responding the LGBCE indicated that, due to the General Election being called, it would be pausing the process until after it had taken place. The public consultation was

launched on 9 July and will close on 16 September. For that reason, the Council has a limited time in which to consider and formulate a response.

## **5 Main Considerations**

5.1 The LGBCE has several statutory functions and may only act in accordance with the powers granted to it. The specific function which is currently being undertaken is a review of the ward boundaries within the Borough of Melton. The LGBCE may not use this process to enlarge or reduce the area for which the Council is responsible.

5.2 As stated above, the first stage of the review process is complete and the LGBCE has indicated that the number of Councillors should remain at 28. In exceptional circumstances the LGBCE may suggest a change to the number of Councillors when it publishes its proposals where that is appropriate to support a particular warding pattern.

5.3 When proposing warding patterns, the LGBCE may only consider the three issues set out in the following paragraphs.

### **5.4 Delivering Electoral Equality for Voters**

In summary this means that each ward should, as far as possible, have an equal number of electors. This means that each voter or resident will have equal access to their elected member(s) and each Councillor's workload should be roughly equal.

The Commission's Electorate Projection for 2030 is used to estimate the number of electors which should be used when considering how the Council's area should be divided into wards. The Projection estimates an electorate of 46,826, which would mean each Ward would have 1,672 electors on average.

The Commission accept that not all wards will be precisely this figure however, there aim is that warding patterns should result in parity where possible.

### **5.5 Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities**

Any wards or boundaries should reflect as far as possible the interests and identities of the area's communities. This will vary depending on the part of the Borough concerned and, for example, town wards will have different characteristics from rural wards.

Examples of issues that show community interests and identities are:

Transport links – Are there good communication links within the proposed ward? Is there any public transport? If proposing that two areas (e.g. villages) should be in the same ward together, how easily can you travel between them?

Community groups – Is there a residents' group or other organisation representing the area? If so, what area is covered? What activities do they undertake and is there joint-working between organisations that indicate shared community interests between different areas?

Facilities – Where do local people in your area go for shopping, medical services, leisure facilities etc? The location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community.

Identifiable boundaries – Natural features such as rivers, valleys and woodland can often provide strong and recognisable boundaries. Similarly, constructions such as major roads and railway lines can also form well known barriers between communities.

Parishes - In areas where parishes exist, the parish boundaries often represent the extent of a community. In fact, the Commission often uses parishes as the building blocks of wards and electoral divisions.

Shared interests – Are there particular issues affecting your community which aren't necessarily relevant to neighbouring areas that might help us determine where a ward boundary should be drawn? For example, many local authorities contain areas which have urban, suburban and rural characteristics, each may have different needs and interests though they are next to each other. One area might be more affected by urban issues such as the local economy while an adjacent area might be more concerned with local transport matters.

#### **5.6 Promoting effective and convenient local government and reflecting electoral cycles.**

This is less likely to be relevant to Melton since elections are held for the full Council every four years. If, for example, elections were by thirds for 3 years with no elections in the fourth year then any warding pattern would need to be balanced to reflect this.

Since Melton only has elections every four years, there is greater flexibility as to the warding patterns that can be created, for example, some wards may have a single member, some two members or even three members. In any case the ward size and electorate contained in it will vary to ensure that there is equal representation by each member, so far as possible.

5.7 Whilst it may be of considerable importance to the Council and to those living in an area and be a strong indicator of a community' identity, the Commission will not usually consider history or tradition of an area. Due to the changing nature of communities over time the Commission would need to be satisfied that tradition and history is relevant now.

5.8 Having considered the numerical data provided by the LGBCE in its electorate forecast, Officers have identified those areas which would have a variance of greater than plus or minus 10% above or below the average electorate. It should be noted that these are projections which are dependant on currently identifiable development occurring as planned, e.g. to give effect to planning permissions which have been granted but not yet implemented. The Council must however, use that numerical data as a basis for its response to the LGBCE. Similarly, the LGBCE make clear that any variance in electorate numbers per ward must not exceed plus or minus ten percent.

- 5.9 Having identified those wards which would have an excessive variance, officers have considered the minimal changes which could be made to current boundaries to reduce that variance to acceptable levels whilst maintaining local identity and minimising changes to current boundaries. Officers developed these proposals in consultation with the Constitution Review Working Group, a politically balanced body, which has agreed with the approach and the outcome suggested below. This process demonstrates that no ward would be abolished, no new wards would need to be created and that only a few wards will be affected in any way.
- 5.10 A copy of a map showing the current ward boundaries appears at Appendix A1 and a map showing the suggested changes appears as Appendix A2. Since identifying individual changes requires a large scale plan, a link to the map of suggested changes is included here: [MBC Polling Districts \(arcgis.com\)](#).
- 5.11 A summary of the changes proposed and the reasons why it is believed that these meet the requirements set out in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.6 above is attached at Appendix B. These can be described as relocating ten electoral polling districts (or parts of districts) from one existing ward to another. Additionally, the electorate numbers for each ward are set out in Appendix C.
- 5.12 Since a considerable amount of data has been considered in this process it is intended that following Council's decision a final review is undertaken to ensure there are no errors in the electorate numbers shown on Appendix C. That said, all wards would be within the appropriate tolerance and therefore any such errors will be minor.
- 5.13 It is recommended that the Chief Executive is delegated authority to finalise the response so that account can be taken of any comments or amendments raised by Council.

## **6 Options Considered**

- 6.1 It is an option not to respond to the consultation however, that is not considered appropriate since it is important for the Council to take appropriate steps to inform this process and ensure that its residents are properly represented.

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Constitution Review Working Group and details of the process have been circulated to all members.

## **8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

- 8.1 A response to the LGBCE will be finalised taking into account the Council's decision and submitted to the LGBCE before 16 September. Once the LGBCE publishes its draft proposals for changes to ward boundaries early next year a further report will be made to Council highlighting any implications and seeking members' views on any response to that proposal.
- 8.2 It should be noted that all members and political groups may submit their own response to the consultation and make proposals that they consider appropriate regardless of the Council's final response.

## **9 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications to this report since there is currently no suggestion that the number of Councillors will change and therefore the total allowances payable will not

be affected. The work required to prepare the response has been undertaken by Council officers and therefore no additional costs have been incurred.

### **Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services**

## **10 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 10.1 The Legal implications are set out in the body of the report. It should be noted that any response to the LGBCE must address the three statutory criteria if they are to be considered when they formulate their proposals.
- 10.2 Special rules apply under section 59 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 if the Council proposes to change the name of any electoral area (i.e. an area for which a member is elected). The changes suggested in the draft response suggested in this report only amend certain boundaries and do not abolish or create new wards meaning that there is no requirement to change the name of any area. If at any point a change is proposed, then a consultation exercise must be undertaken, and a special meeting of Council will need to be arranged. Additional advice will be given as appropriate.

### **Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer**

## **11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 11.1 There are no equalities implications as a direct result of this report. All those residing in the Borough will still have access to a Councillor to represent their interests, although there will be minimal changes to the particular ward member who represents a limited number of residents. No changes are proposed in relation to the allocation of resources for any part of the Borough or residents.

## **12 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)**

A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks to the rights and freedoms of natural persons as a result of the content of this report.

## **13 Community Safety Implications**

- 13.1 There are no community safety implications to this report since, regardless of any changes that are ultimately made to ward boundaries, these will be limited solely to the ward member for whom residents in certain limited areas may vote. There will be no resulting changes to the infrastructure of the Borough nor to the resources allocated in relation to community safety.

## **14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications**

- 14.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications to this report since, regardless of any changes that are ultimately made to ward boundaries, these will be limited solely to the ward member for whom residents in certain limited areas may vote. There will be no resulting changes to the infrastructure of the Borough nor to the allocation of resources that would impact on the environment or climate change.

## **15 Other Implications (where significant)**

- 15.1 Other than minor changes to the geographic area and the electors represented by a limited number of members, there are no other changes to the role of any elected member. There may be minimal implications relating to the electors and external bodies



with which some members will engage however, the reasons for the limited changes proposed is to enhance community identities and ensure that wards retain their identities as far as possible.

## 16 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	That the Boundary Commission does not take into account the views of the Council and the final proposal is not one the council would wish to see in place.	Very Low	Negligible	2

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low				
	2 Very Low	1			
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1.	Submitting a well reasoned response to the LGBCE consultation as recommended in this report in line with the areas that the commission take into account when making their decision will ensure that the Council's view is likely to be given weight when the commission make their final decision.

## 17 Background Papers

17.1 Papers submitted to the Constitution Review Working Group for its meeting on 14 August.

## 18 Appendices

18.1 Appendix A1 – Map of existing warding patterns

18.2 Appendix A2 – Map of proposed warding patterns

18.3 Appendix B – Summary of proposed changes

18.4 Appendix C – Electorate figures for all wards