

COUNCIL

11 September 2017

ELECTORAL REVIEW: RCC RESPONSE TO WARDING PATTERNS CONSULTATION

Report of the Director for Resources

Strategic Aim:	All		
Exempt Information		No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:		Mr T Mathias, Leader, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Places (Highways, Transport and Market Towns)	
Contact Officer(s):	Debbie Mogg, Director for Resources	01572 758358 dmogg@rutland.gov.uk	
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Ward Councillors	All		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Approves the submission to be provided to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on warding arrangements for Rutland County Council from May 2019 (Appendix A) and agrees that the LGBCE be asked to approve a Council size of 28 councillors (an increase in two from that originally proposed).

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To submit a proposal on warding patterns which achieves electoral equality across wards in Rutland and also accords to statutory criteria, for Council approval before submission to the LGBCE for them to consider as part of the consultation on warding patterns.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 On 10 July 2017 the Council agreed a submission to the LGBCE, proposing a Council size of 26 Councillors from May 2019 (No change to the current Council Size) Report No. 135/2017. On 25 July 2017 the LGBCE wrote to the Council advising that it was commencing its consultation on proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards and that it was minded to recommend that 26 County Councillors should be elected to Rutland County Council in future. This consultation ends on 2 October 2017.

- 2.2 This stage of the review involves consultation on the warding patterns in order to achieve electoral equality across the County of Rutland. The LGBCE has engaged with a number of stakeholders including County Councillors, Parish Councils, Local Groups/Organisations and the public.
- 2.3 Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 states that changes to the number and distribution of electors that is likely to take place within the 5 years following the end of the review should be taken into account. Rutland currently has poor levels of electoral equality with 5 out of 16 wards having a variance in the number of electors represented by each councillor of greater than +/-10% compared to the average for the County and in 2023 this increases to 6 out of 16 Wards).
- 2.4 The table below shows the number of electors in 2017 and the estimated number for 2023 based on forecasting information with 26 Councillors:

Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	2017	Variance YEAR	2023	Variance YEAR
Braunston and Belton	1	1,068	-5%	1,086	-11%
Cottesmore	2	2,232	0%	2,342	-4%
Exton	1	1,201	7%	1,222	1%
Greetham	1	1,038	-7%	1,230	1%
Ketton	2	2,239	0%	2,408	-1%
Langham	1	1,160	4%	1,179	-3%
Lyddington	1	1,151	3%	1,170	-4%
Martinsthorpe	1	953	-15%	969	-20%
Normanton	2	2,403	7%	2,503	3%
Oakham North East	2	2,043	-9%	2,078	-15%
Oakham North West	2	3,407	52%	4,585	89%
Oakham South East	2	2,015	-10%	2,206	-9%
Oakham South West	2	1,823	-19%	1,872	-23%
Ryhall and Casterton	2	2,289	2%	2,343	-4%
Uppingham	3	3,016	-10%	3,337	-8%
Whissendine	1	1,056	-6%	1,074	-12%

- 2.5 The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) is a cross-party member working group appointed by Full Council. The terms of reference for the CRWG (Agreed at Annual Council 8 May 2017) provide that the working group will review arrangements, reports and recommendations arising from Boundary and Community Governance reviews. The CRWG held meetings on 18 July 2017 and 2 August 2017 in order to discuss how the Warding Patterns might be changed in order to address the electoral inequalities highlighted above. In considering the options it became clear that drawing up warding patterns using the originally proposed number of members (that would be compliant with the statutory criteria set out below) would be difficult to achieve and would almost certainly result in a high degree of change and disruption. Members of CRWG looked at several

proposals put forward by Members, Officers and the Group collectively and concluded that an increase to 28 Members would result in greater consistency and minimise radical changes to current Warding Patterns. Members of CRWG were also in agreement that a proposal based on 28 Members would be more likely to satisfy the statutory criteria.

- 2.6 Oakham Ward Members were also invited to consider how the boundaries of the Parish Wards of Oakham may be altered to achieve electoral equality in line with statutory criteria.
- 2.7 The proposal at Appendix A is a reflection of the discussion and wishes put forward by the CRWG and Oakham Ward Members. Although it results in a higher variance in the Normanton Ward, discussion with the LGBCE confirmed that proposals which are less radical, avoid disruption and therefore maintain existing community links and identities would carry significant weight. Having one ward outside the tolerance at +11% (Normanton) would not necessarily cause the Commission too much concern particularly where:
- There is evidence that attempts have been made to bring the other Wards within the acceptable parameters;
 - There are only a small number of wards which are at the limit of the parameters;
 - There is strong evidence that the Parishes within the Ward work together and to split them would interfere with community identity and effective governance.

3 STATUTORY CRITERIA

The Warding Pattern Submission from RCC must take into account the following Statutory Criteria:

- 3.1 Boundaries should be drawn in order to achieve **electoral equality** where each Ward Councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. Should proposals depart from the average by more than +/- 10% more persuasive justification will be required based on the other statutory criteria. (Should the LGBCE agree with the RCC Submission to change the Council Size to 28 then each Councillor in Rutland should on average represent around 1129 voters (Based on the Forecast for 2023 – See Appendix A).
- 3.2 The pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the **interests and identities of local communities**. This means respecting localities and setting easily identifiable boundaries based on evidence and consideration of:
- 3.2.1 The patterns of community life, location of public facilities represented by transport links, community groups, facilities such as shops, health services and community halls, and shared interests. There must be evidence that such facilities provide focus for/stimulate community interaction;
- 3.2.2 History and tradition;
- 3.2.3 Major Roads may connect people with community facilities; provide a catalyst for interaction due to safety, environmental or economic considerations, or they may

be seen as physical boundaries between communities (along with rivers/railway lines);

- 3.2.4 Evidence of identity may be presented through existence and activities of Parish Councils, residents associations and voluntary organisations for example;
- 3.2.5 Links between communities where there are proposals for combining two or more separate communities.
- 3.3 Warding patterns should deliver **effective and convenient local government** having regard to:
 - 3.3.1 Impact of workload on individual councillors (e.g. a ward which is large in physical sense, or has a large number of parish councils may place an unreasonable demand on a councillors time);
 - 3.3.2 Internal coherency e.g. existence of reasonable road links, electors able to engage in community activities without travelling through another ward;
 - 3.3.3 Wards may have more than one councillor, but not more than three.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Rural/Urban Areas – there is no legislative provision which supports increased proportionality for either urban areas (which may have more complex issues) or rural areas (where population may be more dispersed);
- 4.2 Ward names will be intended to avoid confusion and mean something to local people. Where wards remain largely unchanged, the existing name will usually be retained. The preference is for shorter names;
- 4.3 Ward names may be changed when there is good reason, for example the identity of the area has changed over time;
- 4.4 The electorate forecast will be taken in to account in LGBCE recommendations particularly where developments have been identified which have a high degree of certainty and will create significant and lasting imbalances, but the primary consideration will be to bring electoral equality at the first election at which they come into effect (2019 for Rutland).

5 PROPOSAL FOR WARDING PATTERNS

The detailed proposal can be found at Appendix A, but a summary is provided below:

- 5.1 A new Ward is created for Barleythorpe, with 2 County Councillors. Barleythorpe would no longer be part of the County Ward of Oakham North West;
- 5.2 The Parish of Teigh is added to Whissendine Ward (removed from Cottesmore);
- 5.3 The Parish of Hambleton is added to Martinsthorpe Ward (removed from Exton & Horn);
- 5.4 Minor boundary changes to the Oakham Parish Wards of Oakham, Oakham North West and Oakham South West in order to achieve electoral equality as detailed

6 TIMETABLE

PART TWO: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS	
LGBCE Consultation on Warding Patterns	25 July 2017 – 2 October 2017
RCC Response to the Consultation – Proposed Warding Patterns Submission	11 September 2017
LGBCE Draft Recommendations Presented to Council	December 2017
LGBCE Consultation on Draft Recommendations	5 December 2017 – 19 February 2018
RCC Response to Consultation	15 January 2018
LGBCE Final Recommendations Published	May 2018
Order comes into force	2019 Elections

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 LGBCE implement their own communications plan which is aimed at three broad audiences:

- The council – elected members, staff, local political parties (including MPs).
- Local organisations – parishes (if any), residents' groups and other local organisations with an emphasis on hard-to-reach groups.
- Members of the public.

7.2 The Commission publicises the review and consultation through a variety of mediums including; Consultation portal; Corporate website; press statements; social media; briefings and guidance documentation; reports and hard copy mapping; posters; and direct correspondence (especially for minority and hard to reach groups).

7.3 In addition RCC has increased the profile of the LGBCE Consultation by implementing its own Communications Plan including publication on the Council Website, display of posters and maps in public places (RCC Office/Libraries) and press releases to ensure that organisations/groups, Parishes and Members of the Public are encouraged to submit comments/feedback to the consultation.

7.4 A briefing will also be provided to the Parish Council Forum on 2 October 2017.

7.5 CRWG have held a series of meetings to discuss warding arrangements and are fully supportive of the proposal presented (Appendix A).

8 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1 Do nothing or increase by 1 Member to 27 Members: The CRWG looked at a variety of proposals which included consideration of 26 Members (no change to the current Council size) and 27 Members, all of which resulted in substantial movement of Ward Boundaries and failed to meet the LGBCE's statutory criteria.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposal to increase the number of members to 28 would require the budget for members' allowances to be increased by £7,540 per annum (Based on the current members' basic allowance of £3,770 per annum). There also likely to be other incidental costs such as expenses, provision of IT equipment etc. This increase would have to be included within the budget setting process for 2019/2020.

10 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 Section 56 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 provides that the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England must be reviewed from time to time. The LGBCE has a rolling programme of electoral reviews and Rutland has been identified as having poor levels of electoral equality with 5 out of 16 wards having a variance of greater than +/-10%.

11 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Screening form has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found.

12 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no community safety implications.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no Health and Wellbeing implications.

14 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 The proposed RCC response to the LGBCE Consultation on Warding Patterns (Appendix A) has been drawn up following consultation with the CRWG and Oakham Ward Members, in accordance with the criteria discussed above. Electoral equality has been demonstrated in 16 out of 17 wards. Where the variance exceeds the LGBCE criteria justification has been provided. Council are asked to endorse this submission as the most effective way of achieving electoral equality, whilst reflecting the interests and maintaining the identities of local communities and providing for effective and convenient local government.

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1 Council Report No 135/2017.

16 APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – RCC Submission to LGBCE on Warding Patterns.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.