

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

6 JULY 2021

Title:

LGBCE Boundary Review – Warding pattern submission

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Paul Follows, Leader of the Council

Head of Service: Robin Taylor, Head of Policy & Governance

Key decision: Yes

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

1.1 The Electoral Review of Waverley Borough Council began in 2020. Following submissions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) on council size, the council has been notified that the Commission is minded to recommend a council size of 50. The next stage of the review is the consultation stage on new ward boundaries to accommodate 50 councillors.

1.2 It is the Commission's responsibility to develop and publish draft recommendations on ward patterns, and there will be an opportunity to comment on these later in the year (October – December 2021). The Commission invites submissions from the council and any other interested parties to inform its development of recommendations. The council is not required to produce a fully worked up proposal for ward patterns, but it is clearly in the council's interest to engage with the process.

1.3 Section 4 of this report outlines the approach of the cross-party Member Working Group to considering options for warding patterns, taking account of the criteria of the Commission to have wards that have electoral equality, reflect the interests and identities of local communities, and promote effective and convenient local government. The Annexes attached show the options considered; the warding pattern that the Working Group recommends is submitted to the Commission; and, qualitative comments on warding issues that the Working Group recommends are also submitted to the Commission to inform its development of warding patterns.

2. Recommendation

That the Executive recommends to Full Council that Waverley makes a submission on future warding patterns to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England comprising Option 2 on Annexe 1 and illustrated in Annexe 2; plus the qualitative comments on warding issues as set out in Annexe 3.

3. **Reason for the recommendation**

- 3.1 The recommendation enables the council to make a submission to the Commission on the future warding pattern for the council. The deadline for submissions is 19 July 2021.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 The Commission's deadline for submissions on warding patterns is 19 July 2021, with the following timetable for the remainder of the Boundary Review:

Consultation on Warding Patterns	11 May 2021 – 19 July 2021
Consultation on draft recommendations	5 October – 13 December 2021
Final recommendations considered by Commission	1 March 2022
Order laid	Spring 2022
Order made	Summer 2022
Implementation	May 2023

Details of the review are available on the [LGBCE website](#).

- 4.2 A cross-party Member Working Group¹ has been convened to review possible options for ward patterns, based on the recommended council size (50) and the Commission's criteria:

- **Delivering electoral equality for local voters** – ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of each vote is the same regardless of where a person lives in the local authority area.
- **Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities** – establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- **Promoting effective and convenient local government** – ensuring that the new wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, the Commission must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council.

4.3 **Delivering electoral equality for local voters**

- 4.3.1 Based on the recommended council size of 50, and the forecast electorate for 2027 of 105,281 (based on population projections which include the effects of housing developments in the Borough), the target average electorate per councillor is 2,106. The Commission will allow a variance of up to +/-10% from the target ratio:

	-10%	Target ratio	+ 10%
1 councillor	1,895	2,106	2,317
2 councillors	3,790	4,211	4,632
3 councillors	5,685	6,317	6,949

¹ Cllrs John Ward (Chairman), Maxine Gale, Martin D'Arcy, Robert Knowles, Peter Nicholson, and Nick Palmer.

4.3.2 Based on this ratio the following table indicates which wards by 2027 will have a variance from this number of more than a 10% (yellow) and more than 20% (red).

Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	Electorate 2027	Variance 2027 to current ratio	Variance to 50 Cllr ratio (2106)
Alfold, Cranleigh Rural & Ellens Green	1	3,621	+96%	+72%
Blackheath & Wonersh	1	1,562	-15%	-26%
Bramley Busbridge & Hascombe	2	3,780	+2%	-10%
Chiddingfold & Dunsfold	2	3,206	-13%	-24%
Cranleigh East	3	6,169	+11%	-2%
Cranleigh West	2	4,165	+13%	-1%
Elstead & Thursley	2	3,211	-13%	-24%
Ewhurst	1	1,798	-3%	-15%
Farnham Bourne	2	3,374	-9%	-20%
Farnham Castle	2	4,229	+14%	0%
Farnham Firgrove	2	3,411	-8%	-19%
Farnham Hale & Heath End	2	3,516	-5%	-17%
Farnham Moor Park	2	4,755	+29%	+13%
Farnham Shortheath & Boundstone	2	3,408	-8%	-19%
Farnham Upper Hale	2	3,501	-5%	-17%
Farnham Weybourne & Badshot Lea	2	4,131	+12%	-2%
Farnham Wrecclesham & Rowledge	2	3,631	-2%	-14%
Frensham Dockenfield & Tilford	2	3,292	-11%	-22%
Godalming Binscombe	2	3,215	-13%	-24%
Godalming Central & Ockford	2	4,561	+23%	+8%
Godalming Charterhouse	2	3,179	-14%	-25%
Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall	2	3,932	+6%	-7%
Godalming Holloway	2	3,493	-5%	-17%
Haslemere Critchmere & Shottermill	3	5,025	-9%	-20%
Haslemere East & Grayswood	3	5,389	-3%	-15%
Hindhead	2	3,447	-7%	-18%
Milford	2	3,631	-2%	-14%
Shamley Green & Cranleigh North	1	1,477	-20%	-30%
Witley & Hambledon	2	3,174	-14%	-25%

4.3.3 The advice from the Commission is to start with a blank page and draw up new boundaries without regard to previous ward boundaries. Given the Commission's decision to reduce the number of councillors from 57 to 50, this is reasonable and

necessary, with one caveat: that it would be advisable to look at parishes as initial building blocks.

4.4 Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities

4.4.1 Community identity and interest can be hard to define as it can mean different things to different people. The Commission want to see submissions which explain what a community is and what defines it and marks it out as distinct from others. This could include the location of public facilities, such as doctors' surgeries, hospitals, libraries or schools. However, such facilities are not an end in themselves and to be included as a definition of a community should provide a focus for community interaction as distinct from their role as points of service delivery to individual citizens.

4.4.2 The Commission want to see boundaries that are easily identifiable, will be long lasting and will not break local ties. Factors to be taken into account include the location and boundaries of parishes and the physical features of the local area such as major roads, railway lines, green space and rivers. Such natural and geographical boundaries could be overlaid onto the parish boundary map as far as they reflect real boundaries as experienced by residents. In some areas, particularly rural ones, a ward may be greater in physical extent than an identifiable community. It can be acceptable to the Commission to combine two or more distinct and separate communities within a single ward.

4.5 Promoting effective and convenient local government

4.5.1 In the Council Size Submission to the Commission, the council put forward a strong preference for two member wards as it was "felt that they would be highly beneficial for electors in terms of choice, availability to the electorate and resilience in case vacancies arise. The council would certainly not wish for any wards to have only one councillor." The Commission state no preference for the number of councillors per ward but would not normally recommend above three per ward.

4.5.2 Wards should be 'internally coherent', that is to say, there are reasonable road links across the ward so that it can be easily traversed, and that all electors in the ward can engage in the affairs and activities of all parts of it without having to travel through an adjoining ward.

4.6 Parishes

4.6.1 Reviews can have consequences for parishes and legislation requires the Commission to make recommendations to the effect that:

- every ward of a parish having a parish council (whether separate or common) must lie wholly within a single electoral division of the relevant county council, and a single ward of the relevant district council; and
- every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single electoral division of the county council and a single ward of the district council.

4.6.2 Waverley has eight parishes with wards. These are: Cranleigh, Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere, Frensham, Ewhurst and Ellens Green, Wonersh and

Witley. Currently there are parishes which are divided between different Borough wards eg Cranleigh parish.

4.7 **Ward names**

4.7.1 Where appropriate, councils and communities can suggest appropriate names for wards that reflect community identities and mean something to local people. Names should be distinct and easily identifiable. However, where wards remain largely unchanged (which is unlikely in this review), the existing name should usually be retained. This supports continuity of identification with an area and voting processes. Ward names can be altered, even where there has been little or no change to electoral boundaries, where there is good reason for change. For example, where community identity has clearly changed over time, a different ward name may better reflect the constituent communities of the proposed electoral area. Ward names should be short, where possible, and not attempt to describe an area exhaustively, eg by reference to all or a number of parishes it encompasses.

4.8 **Methodology**

4.8.1 The Member Working Group has considered a number of options for re-drawing the ward boundaries to achieve an equitable councillor/elector ratio given a council size of 50. These are shown on Annexe 1. The Working Group deliberately has not attempted to re-align the ward boundaries for Farnham, Godalming and Haslemere Town Council, and Cranleigh Parish Council areas. Based on achieving electoral equality, an indicative number of councillors (and wards) is suggested.

- Option 1 aims to meet the council's preference for 2 Member wards. However, this cannot be achieved without also having a number of 1 Member wards. There are two wards with electoral variance exceeding 10%.
- Option 2 combines more of the villages into 3 member wards (Alfold, Dunsfold & Chiddingfold; Eastern villages; Western villages; Witley & Milford). It also adjusts Haslemere up to 7 members, and Cranleigh down to 5 members, but combines Cranleigh and Ewhurst to avoid having a single 1 member ward. All wards are within the +/-10% tolerance.
- Options 3a, 3b and 3c look at different combinations of Milford, Witley, Chiddingfold and Hambledon. They all drift outside the +/-10% tolerance to some degree. 3b could work but would need the BC to increase the council size to 51.

4.8.1 Given the time constraints on the council to make a submission to the Commission, the Working Group has agreed to recommend to the Executive that the Council's submission on warding patterns is based on Option 2 as set out in Annexe 1 and shown on Annexe 2.

4.8.2 As part of its consideration, the Working Group has invited all councillors to comment on any significant issues or anomalies with their current ward that they would wish to have addressed through the current exercise. A number of comments have been received which add valuable local intelligence from ward councillors, and these are set out in Annexe 3. The Working Group recommends that these are included in the Council's submission to the Commission, to inform their recommendations on warding patterns.

5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

- 5.1 The review's core principles of establishing, as far as possible, a structure for fair and accountable local democracy reflects the Council's vision, particularly open, democratic and participative governance.

6. Implications of decision

6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

The Commission has confirmed that most of the work for the review is undertaken by the Commission. However, there is inevitably an overhead of staff time in preparing data and supporting the process which is being met from current approved resource. Members of the Value for Money Overview & Scrutiny Committee have asked to be updated on the Council resources applied to the review.

6.2 Risk management

Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken as necessary.

6.3 Legal

The Boundary Review is conducted by the Commission in accordance with statute. Any changes to the district will be made by Parliamentary Order to take effect at the next Borough Council elections in May 2023. The Council has a duty to support the Commission's work and to provide input to that work.

6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report. The aim of the Boundary Review is to achieve electoral equality between electors in Waverley. Public consultation stages will be conducted by the LGBCE and will therefore be subject to the Commission's own equality impact assessment process.

6.5 Climate emergency declaration

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7. Consultation and engagement

- 7.1 Consultation is a major part of the Boundary Review process. At the start of the review, briefing sessions have been held for all Borough Councillors and a similar event has been held for the Town and Parish Councils. A further briefing is being arranged for Borough Councillors on the warding process.

- 7.2 The Commission will conduct a public consultation on their draft recommendations between October and December 2021.

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 The review is being conducted by the Commission, and the council is invited to contribute to and inform the Commission's considerations. It is in the interest of the council to engage with this process and make a submission on the potential future

ward pattern. A cross-party Member working group is a common approach used to develop a submission to the Commission.

9. Governance journey

- 9.1 This report contains a recommendation from the cross-party Member Working Group, for consideration by the Executive (22 June) and endorsement to Full Council (6 July).

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – Potential ward patterns

Annexe 2 – Warding pattern – Option 2

Annexe 3 - Comments from ward councillors to be passed to the Boundary Commission

Background Papers

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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