

# Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



Report of head of legal and democratic

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## Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's Warding Proposals for Vale of White Horse

**Recommendation:** That the committee

1. considers the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) proposed warding pattern for the district;
2. considers the views from councillors set out in appendix A on the above draft proposals;
3. authorises the democratic services manager, in consultation with the Chair of this committee, to finalise a draft council response for submission to Council for consideration.

Recommendation to Council:

1. To consider the draft submission response agreed by this committee;
2. To authorise the democratic services manager to finalise the document for submission.

### Purpose of Report

1. On 9 July 2024, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) published its proposed warding pattern for the district. This is the latest stage in its electoral review of Vale of White Horse. This report invites the committee to make a recommendation to Council on the proposed response of

the council to the proposals and to recommend that Council authorises the democratic services manager to submit the final response.

## **Strategic Objectives**

2. None of the council's strategic objectives are directly relevant to this report.

## **Background**

3. In January 2024 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) commenced an electoral review of the warding arrangements for the district based on a council size of 38 members – the same as now. This was lower than the number that Council agreed to propose at its meeting in October 2023 – being 41.
4. At its meeting on the 18 March 2024, this committee, under authorisation from Council, agreed a submission to the LGBCE showing its proposed warding arrangements i.e. the geographical areas that we would wish to see each of the councillors representing. The committee also agreed to recommend that the council should consist of 39 councillors. The LGBCE also received a number of other submissions, mainly from various parish and town councils.
5. In July the LGBCE published its draft warding proposal (go to [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk) to view this). Generally, there was a high correlation with the proposals we put forward, which council will no doubt welcome. The LGBCE noted of the council proposals that 'the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries'. Any amendments put forward by the LGBCE were done so to address areas of greater forecast electoral imbalance. In addition, the LGBCE accepted that a warding scheme based on 39 councillors, as proposed by this council, would provide for an effective distribution of councillors across the district and ensure an effective balance of their statutory criteria. Of the 20 wards proposed by the LGBCE, 16 fully or nearly matched our submission.
6. Most of the changes it proposes are in respect of wards along the western boundary of the district. The draft recommendation document also asks for specific views in relation to certain ward proposals, for example ward names.

## **Proposed Response**

7. On 7 August 2024 all councillors were invited to a briefing on the LGBCE's draft proposals and to provide any initial views. The following day all councillors were invited by email to submit any comments by 15 August. Attached at appendix A are details of the responses received at the briefing or via email. The attached also sets out the specific areas where the LGBCE has requested views. The committee is invited to consider the responses and agree a draft submission for consideration by Council.

## **Financial Implications**

8. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. However, the increase in the number of councillors by one to 39 will result in an increase in the allowances and expenses costs.

## **Legal Implications**

9. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **Climate and ecological impact implications**

10. There are no climate or ecological impact implications directly arising from this report.

## **Equalities implications**

11. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **Conclusion**

12. Council needs to agree how it wishes to respond to the warding proposals proposed by the LGBCE. The proposals are generally welcomed as, on the whole, they correlate well with what we put forward. However, there are some changes made by the LGBCE that we may wish to contest. The committee is invited to consider a draft response for consideration by Council at its meeting on 18 September 2024.

## **Background Papers**

- All of the background papers are to be found on the LGBCE's website <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/vale-white-horse>. It contains all public documents pertaining to this review to date.