

# Council



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:**

1. To consider the draft submission response agreed by the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee and attached at appendix 1.
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. Council is invited to consider the recommendation of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee, made at its meeting on 3 September 2024, on a response to the Commission.

### **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, the Community Governance and Electoral Issues 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.
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.
8. At its meeting on 3 September 2024, the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee, considered details of the responses received at the briefing or via email. The committee agreed responses to the Commission's draft recommendations and authorised the democratic services manager in consultation with the chair of the committee to draft a submission for consideration by Council. The draft minutes of that meeting are available [here](#) and set out the rationale for the recommendations. The draft submission is attached at Appendix A.

## **Financial Implications**

9. 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**

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

## **Climate and ecological impact implications**

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

## **Equalities implications**

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

## **Conclusion**

13. 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. The Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee agreed a draft response for consideration by Council. Council is invited to consider the committee's recommendations and the draft response attached to this report.

## **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.

### **Formal response of Vale of White Horse District Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's new electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council**

I set out in this letter the formal response of the council to the Commission's draft recommendations report published in July 2024.

Overall, we welcome the Commission's proposals. We note that the majority of the proposed wards either wholly or mostly match the proposals that we submitted in March. We raise no objection to the following proposals:

- Abingdon – Abingdon South
- Kingston Bagpuize
- Botley & Sunningwell
- Kennington & Radley
- Cumnor
- Marcham & Wootton
- Harwell & Western Valley
- Drayton
- Hendreds
- Steventon & East Hanney
- Sutton Courtenay
- Grove

In respect of the following proposals we raise two objections, respond to specific requests to do so from the Commission and make one observation in respect of the proposed Faringdon & Stanford ward.

#### **Abingdon – Abingdon East and Abingdon North**

The Commission proposed a slight amendment to the council's proposal for Abingdon East and Abingdon North around Mattlock Way and Hendred Way. We note that this is a consequence of the two reviews overlapping. Whilst accepting the logic of the argument for the recommendations in terms of road access, we are of the view that, in this instance, greater weight should be given to achieving coterminosity with the Oxfordshire divisions in Abingdon to achieve effective and convenient local government.

The council therefore requests that its proposal is reinstated.

### **Blewbury & Chilton**

In response to the Commission's invitation to comment on the ward name for the proposed Blewbury & Chilton ward, we support the proposed name which reflects the two largest settlements in the ward.

### **Wantage (Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury)**

We raise no objection to the proposed ward boundaries and support the proposed ward names, Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury.

### **Watchfield & Shrivenham and Ridgeway wards**

The Commission proposes to include Woolstone and Uffington parishes to our proposed Watchfield & Shrivenham ward and Baulking to our proposed Ridgeway ward. Whilst recognising that these draft recommendations achieve electoral equality, we strongly oppose placing Baulking and Uffington in separate wards. The two parishes are natural communities and work closely together at the parish government level. As such we request that the Commission considers alternative arrangements which provide for these two parishes to be included in the same ward recognising that this may result in a compromise regarding electoral equality or a ward covering a larger geographical area.

### **Faringdon & Stanford ward**

Whilst not opposing the proposed Faringdon & Stanford ward, we request that should the Commission agree an alternative final recommendation in response to the outcome of the consultation, that sufficient consideration is given to the smaller villages of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell, their community identity and effective and convenient local government so that these smaller settlements are not used to achieve electoral equality at the expense of the other two statutory criteria.

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