



REPORT TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
ON:	THURSDAY, 26TH JANUARY 2017

REPORT TITLE: Electoral Review 2016-17 Warding proposals.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To agree a submission for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on Warding arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report contains a proposal on Warding for the Borough which Council is invited to endorse. It is recommended that Council:

- Agree the Warding proposals detailed in Appendix A as the Council submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- Subject to agreeing the recommendations in Appendix A, authorise the Chief Executive to formally submit the proposal on Council Warding arrangements from May 2018 to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for their inclusion as early as possible in the next round of consultation.

3. COUNCIL 2017 WARDING PROPOSAL

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council currently has 64 elected Members in 23 wards. Members will be aware that following the agreement at Council on 6th October 2016 the Boundary Commission formally confirmed the size of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to be 51 Councillors for 17 Wards by 2018 to ensure appropriate levels of Governance, Scrutiny and Community Leadership which also allows for the Authority to continue to elect its Members by thirds.

Using the Boundary Commissions guidance to develop a new Warding proposal for the Borough, several factors were taken into consideration, primarily the statutory criteria of;

- **Delivering electoral equality for local voters** – this means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
- **Interests and identities of local communities** – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoid splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.

- **Effective and convenient local government** – this means ensuring that the wards can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole, including both the council size decision and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

In the spirit of openness, transparency and inclusivity there have been several joint meetings with all of the political Group Leaders and an ongoing invitation outside of these meetings for each political Group to submit any minor revisions to a working draft. The end product being the draft Council proposal attached to this report. (Appendix A).

To give Members some insight into the process followed, using the advice and guidance available and subsequent comment from the Commission a set of proposals was worked up for cross party consideration: This generated a couple of suggestions that were worked up to see if they were feasible. Sadly none of those proposals worked within the guidance we had been given. Following these discussions we asked the Commission to consider an initial set of first draft proposals worked up on 17 Wards for Blackburn with Darwen, and for them to give a view in principle on the draft warding arrangements. We were advised that the proposals looked to be within acceptable tolerances and would provide a good first draft for a wider audience to consider.

Having been given a view in principle from the Commission, dialogue with Leaders and Groups has remained open throughout this process and further suggested minor revisions that are within guidelines have been included in the attached draft. Therefore we seek agreement from Council to the draft warding proposal attached as Appendix A.

To emphasise the decision making process, it should be made clear that the draft proposal (Appendix A) does not automatically become the new arrangements, even if agreed by Council: The final decision is that of the Commission and not of the Council – hence it is important for as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to engage with the Commission throughout the consultation.

Subject to Council agreement of Appendix A, the Commission would be advised of the decision reached and asked to place what then becomes the Councils proposal on their website for public consideration, comment and alternative proposal(s).

4. BACKGROUND

It should be noted that the Council cannot take its own decisions on size or warding arrangements and must submit its proposals to the LGBCE at every stage. The LGBCE will consider and determine the proposals based on its own assessment of relevant factors.

Timetable

Draft Council Size submission deadline	17 th October 2016	Done
Boundary Commission decision on Council size	15 th November 2016	Done
Consultation on warding	22 nd November 2016 – 30 th January 2017	Ongoing

Draft recommendations on warding arrangements	11 th April 2017	
Consultation on draft recommendations	11 th April – 19 th June 2017	
Final recommendations published	5 th September 2017	
Order Laid	October 2017	
Implementation*	Elections in 2018*	

Members have been provided with a copy of the full Review timetable. Whilst the Council has engaged with all parties to work on one submission, it should be noted that this does not exclude individuals or political groups from putting forward their own ideas. At every stage the LGBCE will consult widely seeking the views of a range of stakeholders.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Council are asked to note the direction of travel from both this Warding proposal and the background papers submitted to and agreed by Council Forum in October 2016, acknowledging that a detailed review will be undertaken over the next 12 months to redesign a political structure that will be fit for purpose and fit for future to best serve the people of Blackburn with Darwen.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Effectively supporting fewer yet larger Wards will subject to the detailed review outlined in “Policy implications” to deliver strong effective local government.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

1. The LGBCE is required to comply with certain rules when conducting a Review. Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, section 56 requires the LGBCE to conduct a Review of principal local authorities from time to time and recommend whether a change should be made to the “electoral arrangements” meaning:

- the total number of Members to be elected to the Council (‘Council size’);
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas for the purposes of the election of Councillors;
- the number of councillors to be returned by any electoral area (ward) in that area
- the name of any electoral area.

In making recommendations, under Schedule 2 of the Act the LGBCE must have regard to:

- the need to secure equality of representation;
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

2. Any resolutions regarding the scheme of elections must be in accordance with the Part 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

3. The review of Members’ allowances will need to be undertaken by the Independent

Remuneration Panel and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

A small team of Officers continues to be convened when required, to support the various stages and requirements of the Review and its consultations, ensuring compliance with the timetable outlined by the Local Government Boundary Commission England.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

As an integral element to the process, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at various stages of the Review and its consultations.

10. CONSULTATIONS

21st July 2016 the Commission consulted with all Members of the Council on the Review process. From 22nd November – 30th January 2017 the Commission are holding a public consultation on warding arrangements, following which there will be a further public consultation on new draft warding recommendations from 11th April – 19th June 2017. A final decision by the Commission and recommendation to Government will be made on 5th September 2017, following which an Order will be Laid before Parliament in October 2017 for implementation in the all-out elections of May 2018.

Appendix A: ([Ctrl+Click to follow link](#)): This appendix, following ongoing dialogue and minor revisions is the draft Council submission for Members approval.

A Link to each of the 17 Ward maps is below – please paste it into your browser:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B2ZFtqvmkoZXRnJPUUViaUdq3c>

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Date:	13 th January 2017	
Background Papers:	Report to Council Forum October 2016.	