

20 March 2024		ITEM: 13
Council		
Local Government Boundary Commission England Boundary Review 2024/2025		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: n/a	
Report of: The Boundary Working Group		
Accountable Assistant Director: n/a		
Accountable Director: Daniel Fenwick, Executive Corporate Director, Corporate Services Team		
This report is public		
Version Final		

Executive Summary

This report sets out the outcomes of the Boundary Working Group following its consideration of the Local Government Boundary Commission England [LGBCE] request for submissions from political groups on ward boundaries.

Commissioner Comment:

No Comment

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **The Members' Boundary Review Working Group recommends that Full Council makes a submission for the creation of a new Purfleet-on-Thames ward with two members as described at paragraph 2.4 in this report.**
- 1.2 **To delegate to the Executive Corporate Director for Corporate Services in his role as Monitoring Officer (and his nominee) authority to draft and submit the agreed consultation response following consultation with the Chair of the Working Group.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In 2023, the LGBCE started the process of conducting a boundary review for Thurrock Borough Council. The LGBCE is a non-political organisation which deals with boundary reviews for councils and for Parliament.

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- 2.2 The LGBCE decided to undertake a boundary review of Thurrock Council, which in summary comprises reviewing the total number of councillors and the pattern of ward boundaries. The last review was in 2002. Commissioners agreed the need for a review. The LGBCE has determined that the number of councillors in Thurrock should remain at 49 and is now considering the pattern of wards in the borough. The Council is invited to make a submission on ward patterns but is not obliged to do so. Any person may make a submission to the Boundary Commission.
- 2.3 Thurrock Council set up a cross-party working group to put in a council submission on the size of the Council and on boundaries (the Boundary Working Group). The working group was politically balanced and was composed of 2 Conservative members (Cllrs Carter and B. Maney); 2 Labour members (Cllrs Morris-Cook and Watson) and 1 Non-Political Alliance of Independent Councillors (Cllr Speight). The criteria for determining ward boundaries are:
- a. securing equality of representation of electors between wards (in practice meaning an electorate within 10% from exact equality)
 - b. reflecting the identities and interests of local communities in wards
 - c. securing effective and convenient local government
- 2.4 The Working Group met on the 7 March 2024 and discussed whether an agreed Council submission to the Boundary Commission could be made. The following representation was agreed for a new ward in Purfleet ward because the electoral inequality was at 22%, which is unacceptable to all groups on the Council. Whilst no formal map is put forward, the Working Group proposes a new two-member Purfleet-on-Thames ward is to be created, taking one seat from the east of the Borough and one seat from West Thurrock and South Stifford the following boundaries:
- the A282 to the east
 - the borough's boundary to the south and
 - the Mardyke river to the north and west
- 2.5 Whilst the timeframe is very tight, the LGBCE's timetable will mean that the new ward boundaries will be in place for the all-out election in May 2025.
- 2.6 The LGBCE will hold two rounds of public consultation on ward boundaries, the one that is currently being held and then another consultation following the publication of their draft proposals. After their second round of consultation, they might hold another round of consultation, but are more likely to public their final recommendations and put forward a paper to Parliament. The Council will have an opportunity to comment on the Boundary Commission's proposals for ward patterns.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Working Group considered the details of all boundaries. There was no cross-party consensus on boundaries for every ward and Members of the working group felt that a partial joint submission would not be the best option. Instead, political groups could submit their own views to the LGBCE.

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3.2 The Working Group, however, felt the Council could put forward a consensual view on the creation of a new ward outlined in the appendix.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 There was a cross party consensus in the working group to put forward a submission to the LGBCE which recommends a new Purfleet-on-Thames ward.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 All political groups have had the opportunity to engage with this issue through the Working Group. As stated above, any person may make a submission to the LGBCE.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The review of ward boundaries directly affects the election of Members to represent communities on the Council. The review is expected to have a positive impact on democracy in Thurrock by ensuring more equality of representation of people across Thurrock is refreshed to suit the current distribution of residents across the borough.

6.2 Following the LGBCE's decision the Electoral Registration Officer is required to undertake a polling district review based on the new ward patterns and publish an electoral register based on the new districts. This can only take place after the new ward patterns are in place. Whilst the current timetable will allow for implementation by May 2025, there is limited scope for slippage on this timetable.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Rob Chimani**
Management Accountant
11 March 2024

There are no immediate financial implications to the Council, however if the outcome of ongoing review of ward boundaries results in an increase in the number of wards, a further business case may be necessary to address potential cost pressures.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Governance Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer
11 March 2024

The electoral review is being conducted by the LGCBE in accordance with the powers and rules within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (The 2009 Act).

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The 2009 Act sets out the statutory criteria to which the LGCBE are required to have regard in conducting electoral reviews, which are:

- 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.

There are various stages to the review process and the Council can provide input into the process. The final recommendations of the LGCBE will be implemented a by Parliamentary Order to take effect at the next Council elections in May 2025.

The Best Value Inspection published in June 2023 recommended that the Council change its scheme of elections, from electing its members in thirds, to “all-out” elections, where all members are elected at the same time. The report recommends that if the Council does not make this change by 31 July 2023, that the Secretary of State should consider making an Order under Section 86 of the Local Government Act 2000 to secure this.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Diversity Team
11 March 2024

There are no specific diversity or equality implications arising from this report.

7.4 Risks

There are no current corporate risks identified with the submission of political groups to the LGBCE. The final decision rests with the LGBCE. 6.2 outlines the risks associated with the proximity of the completion of the review to the timetable for the May 2025 elections. The Council will be working with the LGBCE to ensure they are cognisant of this risk and the importance of keeping progress on track.

7.5 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council’s website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

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Report Author:

Dolapo Akinbolagbe and Jacob Hatch

Political Assistants to the Labour and Conservative Groups

Legal Services

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