

# **Bassetlaw District Council**

## **Council**

**21<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

### **Report of the Chief Executive**

#### **Electoral Review**

Cabinet Member: Corporate & Financial Services  
Contact: David Armiger

#### **1. Public Interest Test**

- 1.1 The author of this report David Armiger has determined that the report is not confidential.

#### **2. Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 To provide an update on the upcoming Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of Bassetlaw.
- 2.2 To seek Council approval for the establishment a cross-party Member Working Group to make recommendations on a Council submission to the Commission.

#### **3. Background and Discussion**

- 3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has informed the Council of its decision to carry out an Electoral Review of the Council size (number of elected councillors) and the number of wards and ward boundaries for Bassetlaw District Council. The review process has started and final recommendations will be published in February 2025. Any changes that may be made will come into effect for the local government elections expected in May 2027.
- 3.2 The LGBCE is currently in the preliminary period for the review (the Review Timetable is attached at Appendix A) and is in the process of collating the information required before the review formally starts. A briefing for all Members took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> July. The information the Council will be required to submit at this stage of the process is the evidence for the Council Size and Electorate Forecast information.
- 3.3 A review is not in the Council's hands; it is undertaken by the LGBCE and under its criteria. The Council can present recommendations but these recommendations must adhere to the requirements.
- 3.4 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. These include:
- The total number of councillors to be elected to the Council.
  - The names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions.

- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward or division.

3.5 The Boundary Commission must, by law, take into account several key factors when taking decisions on an electoral review.

- The need to secure equality of representation across the local authority area.
- The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities.
- The need to secure effective and convenient local government.
- The need to ensure that the electoral arrangements of a local authority reflect its electoral cycle.

These are known as the statutory criteria. As the LGBCE takes decisions on the most appropriate electoral arrangements, it will seek to achieve a balance between these criteria.

3.6 Local authorities that hold whole-council elections and which have wards/divisions represented by two or three members can ask to undertake electoral reviews with the objective of providing for single-member wards/divisions.

### 3.7 **Main issues**

3.7.1 The Council is required to make a submission on Council size by 5th January 2024. It is proposed that a cross-party Member Working Group be established to prepare proposals to be submitted to Council in December. The Group will also agree the evidence required to submit to the LGBCE so they can make a fully-informed decision regarding Council size that supports local needs.

3.7.2 The design of any new ward boundaries will be based on forecasted electorate figures for 2030, five years on from when the review is due to be completed in 2025. A copy of the Electoral Forecast information is also included in the addendum to this report. The Working Group will consider the calculation of that forecast including residential developments.

3.7.3 This review is for local government ward boundaries only and is not in any way connected to the separate Parliamentary constituency boundary review which has recently concluded.

3.7.4 The Council must also undertake a Polling Station Review irrespective of the Electoral Review and a separate report has been submitted on this process.

## 4. **Implications**

- a) For service users

The aim of the review is to devise a Council size and warding pattern that are convenient for local residents. There will be two phases of public consultation to provide an opportunity for local people to express their opinion on these matters.

b) Strategic & Policy

An electoral review provides an opportunity to shape the Council for the future. The new Corporate Plan details the Council's corporate priorities for the next four years and, amongst other matters, it makes clear that the Council exists to support local people and improve the quality of life for our residents.

c) Financial - Ref:24 /124

None at this stage.

d) Legal – Ref: 071/09 /2023

The powers for the LGCBE to conduct an Electoral Review are contained within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This consolidates and amends provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

e) Human Resources

The Review will require a significant volume of work to be undertaken by officers, partly in Democratic & Elections. However, it will also require support from Communications, GIS and Planning teams.

Many authorities appoint Project Officers to undertake such work but there is no capacity available to undertake this. External support is available at a significant cost and would itself require significant internal support. The Working Group will, therefore, need to keep capacity issues under review.

It should be noted that once the Review has started, any external events the Council has to contend with would not be considered as a basis for stopping the process and the Council must adhere to the published timetable.

f) Climate change, Environmental

There are none directly arising from the report,

g) Community Safety, Equality and Diversity

The review is conducted by the LGBCE and they are responsible for ensuring any equality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues are identified and addressed as part of the review process.

h) GDPR

There are none directly arising from the report.

i) This is a key decision, number **1005**

## 5. Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The risk to the Council is that any changes the LGBCE may make to Council size and ward boundaries may not allow the Council to properly represent its constituents and

respond effectively to local needs. However, the review process allows the Council to provide evidence in support of the number of councillors it feels is necessary to continue to properly represent constituents and to effectively conduct all aspects of Council business. This, and the public consultation periods, should be used to ensure the LGBCE can make a properly-informed decision.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That Council notes the outline of the Electoral Review process and the role of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in undertaking the review.
- 6.2 That the preparation of proposals for the Council's submission to the Commission be undertaken by a cross-party Working Member Group on a 3.1.1 basis, and the proposals be submitted to Council in December 2023.
- 6.4 The Terms of Reference (Appendix B) for the Electoral Review Working Group be approved.
- 6.3 The following Members be appointed to the Working Group: Councillors A. Rhodes (Chair), Councillors H. Brand, D.Henderson, F. McFarland and J.Naish.

### **Background Papers**

### **Location**

Electoral Review of Bassetlaw District Council – A Guide for Councillors LGBCE  
Electoral Reviews – Guidance for Councillors LGBCE

Head of Corporate Services

## Appendix A – Bassetlaw Electoral Review Timetable

These timetables outline the key dates and activities for both the Council (shown in bold) and the Commission during the review process.

### Preliminary Period

Briefings	Attendees		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Preliminary Meeting	Council Leader Chief Executive	Chair Chief Executive	17 March 2023
Officer Briefing	Council Officers involved in review	Review Manager Review Officer	2 June 2023
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	30 June 2023
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	<del>see</del> 17 July 2023
Parish/Town Council & Local Groups Briefing	Not required	Review Manager Review Officer	tbc

### Council Size

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Develop council size proposal	Council Political Groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission.	Now until December 2023
Submission of council size proposals	Council Political Groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt of submissions.	5 January 2024
Commission Meeting: Council Size	Not required	Commission	13 February 2024

### Warding Patterns

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Consultation on warding patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	20 February – 29 April 2024
Commission Meeting: Draft Recommendations	Not required	Commission	16 July 2024

Consultation on Draft Recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	30 July – 7 October 2024
Commission Meeting: Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	21 January 2025
Final Recommendations Published	Not required	Commission publish final recommendations report and mapping	04 February 2025

Order

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Involvement</i>		<i>Key Dates</i>
	<i>Council</i>	<i>LGBCE</i>	
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Spring 2025
Order made	Not required	Commission	Summer 2025
Implementation	Council	Not required	2027

## **Appendix B -Electoral Review Working Group – Terms of Reference**

### **Composition**

The Working Group shall comprise of five Members based on 3:1:1 basis.

### **Scope**

The Working Group is established to:

- (a) Oversee and ensure full Member involvement in and support to officers in progressing the review of Council size and the ward boundaries in Bassetlaw by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- (b) To formulate draft recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for approval by the Council relating to:
  - i) the total number of Members of the Council;
  - (ii) the number and boundaries of electoral wards for the purposes  
Of the election of Councillors;
  - (iii) the number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral ward; and
  - (iv) the name of any electoral area.
- (c) To advise the Council, in consultation with officers, on proposals relating to any wider “community governance review” of local democratic and electoral arrangements, which may emerge that are considered relevant as a result of the current review process.

### **Procedures**

The Council Procedure Rules will apply to meetings of the Working Group insofar as is necessary to ensure effective and efficient discharge of the functions of the Working Group, as they apply to Committees and Sub-Committees.

The Council will appoint the Chair, the Working Group may appoint a Vice Chair from amongst its membership.

It is agreed that the Working Group will be established on a task and finish basis. Working Group business will cease upon the conclusion of the current electoral review.