

Title of Report:	Proposed Boundary Review
Report to be considered by:	Council on 17 September 2015
Forward Plan Ref:	C3029

Purpose of Report: To outline to Council the processes involved in having an Electoral review undertaken of the District.

Recommended Action:

1. To seek approval to approaching the Local Government Boundary Commission to undertake an Electoral Review of the District in time for the next District elections in 2019.
2. That the review be undertaken by the Council as opposed to the two Political Groups.

Reason for decision to be taken:

1. To ensure that a review of the size of the Council is undertaken in the light of the governance model adopted in 2001 (Executive and Scrutiny).
2. To acknowledge that the developments at Newbury Racecourse and Sandford may, when completed, impact on Greenham Ward and provide a disproportionate ratio of residents to Councillors

Other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: Local Government Boundary Commission Guidance and the Local Democracy and Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Published Works: N/A

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSA5 – Become an even more effective Council
The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy aims and priorities by improving the Council’s overall efficiency.

Portfolio Member Details	
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Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	27 August 2015

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Implications

Policy:	N/A
Financial:	Once the review has been completed there will be a need to communicate the findings to the public which may then incur costs.
Personnel:	N/A
Legal/Procurement:	This review will be conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission in accordance with the Local Democracy and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
Property:	N/A
Risk Management:	N/a

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes		Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:				
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)				
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at http://intranet/EqIA				<input type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the Administration's manifesto there is a pledge which relates to having a boundary review undertaken by the time the next District Council elections are held in May 2019.
- 1.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) is responsible for undertaking boundary reviews in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
- 1.3 Before the LGBC can be approached there will need to be a decision by full Council supporting this review. The LGBC has been approached to get a preliminary view as to whether they could undertake this review in advance of the next District Council elections in 2019. The LGBC has confirmed that they would be able to undertake a review but will not be able to identify the date for this until the Council has formally made an approach to the Commission.
- 1.4 The Boundary Commission for England is also proposing to conduct a review of all Parliamentary Boundaries in 2016 and concluding these by 2018.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 It is proposed that an Electoral review be undertaken based on the following reasons:
 - (i) That the new political management structures introduced as part of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) have changed the role of Councillors, both those that sit on the Executive and those that undertake scrutiny, regulatory and representational roles.
 - (2) The developments at Newbury Racecourse and Sandford and other potential sites, when complete, may provide an imbalance in the "electoral ratio" for several wards across the District.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes

- 3.1 The LGBC will take account of equality in terms of electoral ratio and will reflect this in their final report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The first step in approaching the LGBC to request that they undertake a review will be to secure the approval of full Council.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In order to request the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) to undertake a review of the District it is necessary to obtain the consent of full Council. It is therefore proposed that the LGBC be approached for them to undertake an Electoral Review and complete this so that the new boundaries can be used for the 2019 District Council elections.
- 1.2 The LGBC was established by Parliament under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The LGBC is independent of central and local government and is accountable to Parliament through a committee of MP's chaired by the Speaker of the House.
- 1.3 The LGBC undertakes three types of reviews. These are:
- (1) Electoral reviews - These are reviews of the electoral arrangements of local authorities, the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards. Electoral reviews are usually initiated primarily to improve electoral equality.
 - (2) Principal area boundary reviews - These are reviews of the boundaries between local authorities and are used to address minor boundary anomalies that hinder effective service delivery.
 - (3) Structural reviews - These reviews relate to proposed changes from two tier to unitary local government.

2. Reasons for an Electoral Review

- 2.1 The Council has been in existence since 1998. It has 52 Councillors representing 30 wards. Since 2001 it has operated the Executive model of governance which requires all key decisions to be taken by the Executive comprising of 10 Members. Section 56(2) of the 2009 Act allows the LGBC to undertake such reviews.
- 2.2 The new development at the racecourse will result in 1,500 new properties being built over time. Furthermore the Sandleford development will also result in 2,000 additional properties being built although the development period is to 2026. These two developments will increase in the number of electors in these two areas. This will mean that Greenham ward will have an imbalance in terms of electoral ratio once the developments have been completed. Other potential development sites across the District and population forecasts covering the next ten years will also need to be factored into this review.
- 2.3 An electoral review can be undertaken when variances in representation become notable, such as:
- (1) More than 30% of a Council's ward/divisions have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for the authority.
 - (2) One or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%.

2.4 For the purposes of this Council it is suggested that the electoral review look at the following:

- (1) The total number of Members to be elected to the Council (ie the size of the Council);
- (2) The purpose of the election of Councillors (eg: whether they have Executive, Scrutiny, Regulatory roles); and
- (3) The number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards) for the purposes of the election of Councillors;

2.5 The LGBC believe that factors which can influence Council size can be drawn together into four broad elements:

- (i) The decision making process - what decisions, taken where, and how is it managed?
- (ii) Quasi-judicial processes - eg planning and licensing – what is the workload and how is it managed?
- (iii) The scrutiny process - what is scrutinised and how is the total scrutiny workload managed?
- (iv) The representative role of the elected Member.

2.6 As part of any review the LGBC will recognise that the Council itself is reducing in size and the number of services it provides is and will continue to reduce in line with its reducing budget.

3.0 Electoral Review Process

3.1 Each Electoral review will start with a preliminary period during which time the Commission will meet with the Council and interested parties to explain in detail the review process and prepare information needed for this review. At this initial stage the LGBC will work with Members and officers and our key partners to gather information relating to the following:

- (i) Details of the current electoral arrangements - the current electoral register.
- (ii) Identification of Parishes and their boundaries.
- (iii) Other indicators which identify and build up a map of communities.
- (iv) Electoral forecasts.

3.2 As part of this review the LGBC will look to explore the ways in which Parish Councils and Members aim to work effectively with their communities. At the end of the initial review process the Council or political groups will be required to submit their Council size proposals to the Commissioner for consideration.

3.3 Appendix 1 provides more details on the various stages of the review.

4.0 The Way ahead

- 4.1 Subject to Council approving an approach being made to the LGBC for an Electoral Review and the Council receiving confirmation that it can be undertaken by the Commission the first decision to be made is whether the Council should work up proposals or whether the political groups should do this. It is recommended that the Council works up proposals and submits one proposal to the Commission.
- 4.2 In terms of governance of this review once the Council has a timeframe from the Commission for undertaking this review there will be a need to establish an officers group to take forward the detailed work required mainly relating to election forecasts and a Members Group which will set the direction and maintain a strategic overview of the process. The Members Group will have to be based on proportionality.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Stages for Electoral Review

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: N/A

Officers Consulted: David Holling, Phil Runacres

Trade Union: N/A

Appendix 1 – Stages for Electoral Reviews

Stage	Action	Duration
Preliminary Stage	<p>Informal dialogue with Council. Focusing on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data. Commissioner level involvement in briefing Group Leaders on the issue of Council size. Meetings are also held with officers, Group Leaders, full Council and, where applicable Parish and Town Councils.</p> <p>At the end of the process the Council (and its political Groups) should submit their proposals for the Commission to consider.</p>	6 months in advance of the formal start of the review.
Formal start of the review		
Council size analysis stage	The Commission will analyse the submissions from the Council and/or political groups on council size and will prepare papers for a formal commission meeting. The Commission will then take a view on what terms it will consult publicly.	5 weeks
Council size consultation	Public consultation based on the Commission's view of the submissions received from the Council (or political groups).	6 weeks
Council size decision	The Commission will consider the evidence it receives during the consultation exercise and will take a "minded to" decision on council size and will then publish its conclusions on the matter.	5 weeks
Consultation on future warding arrangements	The Commission will invite warding proposals from the Council (or political groups) based on the Commission's conclusions on council size.	10 weeks
Development of draft recommendations	The Commission will carry out an analysis of the representations received. The Commission will then reach conclusions on its draft recommendations.	10 weeks
Consultation on draft recommendations	The Commission will publish its draft recommendations and carryout a public consultation exercise on them.	12 weeks
Development of final recommendations	The Commission will carryout an analysis of all representations received. The Commission will then reach conclusions on its final recommendations.	10 weeks