WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW – WARDING PATTERNS
Report of Senior Management Team

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present details of what is involved in the next stage of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s (LGBCE) district ward review and outline options for the Council to submit a warding arrangements proposal to the LGBCE.

2.0 Decisions Sought

2.1 To agree the preferred option for submitting a Stage 2 – Warding Patterns proposal to the LGBCE.

3.0 Link to Corporate Priorities

3.1 Fit for Purpose Council: The Council is effective at providing Local Government functions in line with legislation, resources and best practice, and strives to improve these further.

3.2 The approved Council Plan for 2015/2019 states that ‘We will ensure the governance of the Council, its Committees and services enables effective decision making and operation by reviewing the District Council’s electoral boundaries with a view to reducing the number of Councillors for 2019/20.

4.0 Introduction & Background

4.1 Council at its meeting on 19 July 2016 (Minute DC20/16 refers) considered a report seeking authority to approach the LGBCE for them to review the total number of District Councillors.

4.2 The LGBCE is an independent statutory body which was established by and is accountable to Parliament. The role of the LGBCE is:

- to provide electoral arrangements for English principal authorities that are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters; and
- to keep the map of English local government in good repair by working with councils to help them deliver effective and convenient local government citizens.

4.3 There are two distinct stages to a Boundary Review:-
(a) Preliminary Stage – for the Council in indicate what size of membership will be appropriate for the future to undertake the functions and responsibilities of the authority.

(b) Second Stage – for the LGBCE to identify and consult upon the warding pattern for the District. Within the overall number of councillors, there will be a need to create wards which address the criteria of electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government.

4.4 On 25 April 2017 (Minute DC62/16 refers), Council indicated to the LGBCE that the preferred size of membership of the Authority from May 2019 was 24 councillors.

4.5 The Council has now received confirmation that the LGBCE is minded to recommend that 24 councillors should be elected in future.

5.0 Issues

5.1 Following receipt of the above confirmation, the LGBCE will work out the optimum number of local government electors each councillor should represent by dividing the total number of local government electors by the number of councillors. This produces a figure for the average councillor to elector ratio. Using the average ratio of local government elector per councillor, the LGBCE can measure how far the ratio in each current or proposed ward departs from that average. When formulating recommendations, the LGBCE seek to achieve ratios close to the Authority average in each ward. The further that electoral equality departs from the average for the Authority, the stronger the evidence of the other considerations they take into account will need to be.

5.2 In practice, reviews do not result in wards of mathematically equal size because the approach to electoral equality must be tempered by other considerations which generally reflect the particular characterises of an area under review, and its communities – recognising that councillors represent individual electors and collective communities.

5.3 The LGBCE will therefore seek some rational to explain why, in community or other terms, a particular pattern or set of boundaries is being proposed. The technical guidance from LGBCE states:

“Community identity and interest is harder to define than electoral equality for which there is a simple mathematical test. Often, it cannot easily be measured, and can mean different things to different people. It is essential, therefore, that those taking part in a review who make a case on the basis of community identities and interests can explain to us exactly what the community is and, more importantly, what defines it and marks it out as distinct from others”.

5.4 The LGBCE recommends that electoral wards should return no more than three councillors, although it should be noted that there is no legislative restriction on the number of councillors that may be returned from a ward. There are currently no principal authority wards in England returning more than three councillors.

5.5 Councils and their communities are able to suggest appropriate names for wards that reflect community identities and mean something to local people. In
determining names for wards, the LGBCE will aim to avoid causing confusion amongst local electors and ensure that names are distinct and easily identifiable. Where wards remain largely unchanged, the existing name should be retained to support continuity of identification with an area and voting processes. The preference of LGBCE is for names that are short rather than those which attempt to describe an area exhaustively.

6.0 Options considered

6.1 As the next stage of the review commences, the LGBCE will seek to consult on two occasions:

- Information gathering stage – LGBCE will draw up new boundaries for wards across the area to accommodate the 24 councillors. They will ask local people for their help in drawing up draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements
- Consultation on draft arrangements – when LGBCE has published its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements (number of wards, number of councillors, representing each ward, ward names and ward boundaries) for an area, the Council, public and partners will have the chance to comment on them.

6.2 The period of consultation in respect of the future warding arrangements commenced on 27 June 2017 and will end on 4 September 2017. At the Council meeting on 19 July 2016, it was resolved that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 act as the review working group. Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 will meet to consider initial proposals for a warding arrangement for the District.

6.3 There are no more Council meetings scheduled between now and 4 September 2017. Therefore if the Council is minded to submit a response to the consultation in respect of the future warding arrangements, it will be necessary either to:-

(a) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to submit the response to the LGBCE. In doing so, any response will be subject to the agreement of a proposal by Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 acting as the review working group, or;

(b) Arrange an Extraordinary Council meeting to consider the submission on Tuesday, 5 September 2017. Although the consultation is due to end on Monday, 4 September 2017 the LGBCE have confirmed that this date is acceptable to them.

6.4 The Council is not required to submit a warding arrangement proposal to the LGBCE. However, failure to submit a proposal will create a risk that the future warding arrangements within Richmondshire may be determined on the basis of a rational which may not accord with the priorities of the Council, councillors and partners in the District. This approach is not recommended.
7.0 Consultation

7.1 In developing a warding arrangement proposal for the LGBCE, the Council will consult Members and may choose to consult partners and local people on its submission. This will be a matter requiring consideration by Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 when it has developed a proposal.

7.2 Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 will need to review responses to the internal consultation prior to finalising its warding arrangement proposal.

7.3 It should be noted that partners and members of the public will be able to independently submit their own warding arrangement proposals directly to the LGBCE.

8.0 Timetable

8.1 If Council is minded to agree to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to formally submit a warding arrangement proposal to the LGBCE, it will be necessary for the decision to be made at this meeting as there are no further scheduled Council meetings.

8.2 The timetable for the second stage of the review is set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date from</th>
<th>Date to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGBCE Consultation on warding arrangements</td>
<td>27 June 2017</td>
<td>4 September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft recommendations published for consultation by the LGBCE</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final recommendations published</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3 Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 will therefore need to meet and then agree to meet through the review period in order to consult upon and finalise a submission for the LGBCE. This work will need to have been completed before the end of August in order for the Council to formally submit the response.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s decision for 24 Councillors to be elected in Richmondshire from May 2019 be noted.

9.2 That the report and timetable for the remainder of the ward boundary review be noted.

9.3 That Council determines the two options outlined at paragraph 6.3.
10.0 Corporate Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scrutiny Consultation</th>
<th>Scrutiny 1 is the appointed working group in relation to the Ward Boundary Review and will be undertaking the work in relation warding patterns.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>The review process involves public consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment &amp; Sustainability</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Implications</td>
<td>None directly associated with this report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Implications</td>
<td>The review is being undertaken by the LGBCE in accordance with statutory criteria. Therefore, there are no direct legal implications for the Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Implications</td>
<td>Failure to ensure electoral representation is fair and equitable restricts the Council’s ability to deliver services reflective of local need, demands and choice. Paragraph 6.4 details the risks associated with Council failing to submit a warding arrangement proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Implications</td>
<td>None directly associated with this report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalities Implications</td>
<td>Securing equality of representation and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities are key aspects of electoral reviews. Such considerations therefore form part of formal LGBCE reviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Safety Implications</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.0 Further Information

11.1 Background Papers – Further information about the process for reducing the number of Councillors can be found at: http://www.lgbce.org.uk/home

11.2 File Reference – None

11.3 Appendices – None

Contact Officer: Michael Dowson  
Email/Extension: michael.dowson@richmondshire.gov.uk  
Ext. 44011