

**Divisions affected – All**

**COUNCIL**

**16 APRIL 2024**

**ELECTORAL REVIEW:**

**FURTHER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IN THE  
DISTRICTS OF CHERWELL AND THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE**

**Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Council is RECOMMENDED** to support the further draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) relating to the division boundaries for the Cherwell District and Vale of White Horse District and to submit a response to the further LGBCE consultation confirming this position.

**Background**

2. The Electoral Review is formally split into two phases:
  - a) Council size including development of electorate forecasts
  - b) Division electoral arrangements setting the boundaries for each county division.
3. The Commission has decided that the Council size should be increased by six members from 63 to 69 members. It has also agreed that there should be 69 County divisions meaning that there will no longer be any multi-member divisions. The Commission's decisions are in line with the response made by the Council on 13 December 2022.
4. The Council agreed its response to the LGBCE draft recommendations on boundaries and names for 69 single-member divisions at its meeting on 12 December 2023.
  - a) The Council response highlighted concerns around the proposed division boundaries in and around Banbury in line with the recommendations of the cross-party working group established to respond to each stage of the Electoral Review. The majority of members of the working group

supported boundaries following the arterial routes into Banbury with adjustments to division boundaries in Cherwell District to reflect population figures. This was in line with recent Community Governance Reviews (CGRs) undertaken by Cherwell District Council and was considered by the majority of the cross-party working group to better reflect local communities than the LGBCE draft recommendations at that time.

## **Timeline**

### 5. Timeline:

LGBCE consultation on division arrangements – 28 February to 8 May 2023.

LGBCE consultation on draft recommendations – 3 October to 11 December 2023.

LGBCE consultation on further draft recommendations – 27 February to 22 April 2024

LGBCE Final recommendations published – 30 July 2024

Recommendations laid before Parliament and become effective for the next County Council Election in May 2025.

## **Further draft recommendations: Cherwell and Vale of White Horse**

6. During consultation on the draft recommendations, which were published on 3 October 2023, the LGBCE received 41 representations, most of which commented on the proposals for divisions in Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
7. In light of these representations, the LGBCE has amended its proposals and has published further draft recommendations for all divisions in Cherwell and most in Vale of White Horse. Detailed information which set out the boundaries for each division is available at [www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/oxfordshire](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/oxfordshire)
8. The LGBCE believes that it has received sufficient evidence relating to the rest of the county to finalise its recommendations, so this consultation is focused only on the Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
9. The further draft recommendations largely reflect the response of the Council on 12 December 2023 relating to the divisions in and around Banbury in Cherwell District. The Council had not identified any specific changes relating to the Vale of White Horse District and the LGBCE's changes reflect responses objecting to the proposed divisions in the Wantage area. These submissions primarily oppose

the inclusion of the Charlton area of the parish in a division with the rural parishes of Ardington, Blewbury, Chilton, East Hendred, Lockinge and West Hendred. Respondents considered that Charlton was an integral part of Wantage which has little in common with the rural parishes.

## **Council response**

10. The cross-party working group established to develop the Council response to each phase of the electoral review comprises the following members:

Liberal Democrat Green Alliance –	Cllrs Robin Bennett, Neil Fawcett, Freddie van Mierlo and Alison Rooke
Conservative Independent Alliance –	Cllrs Kieron Mallon, Ian Snowdon and Ted Fenton
Labour and Cooperative Party Group –	Cllrs Brad Baines and Andrew Coles (later replaced by Cllr Michael O'Connor)
Non-aligned Independent –	Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak

Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak was appointed as chair

11. The working group met on 6 March 2024 to consider how the Council should respond to the LGBCE's further draft recommendations which relate to Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
12. The majority of members of the working group support the changes made to the division boundaries for Cherwell District. Whilst the Council had not identified any specific concerns relating to the Vale of White Horse, members acknowledged the concerns expressed in the submissions relating to the Wantage area. They were pleased that the LGBCE had taken account of local views in Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse and welcomed the consultation on further draft recommendations.
13. If the LGBCE'S further recommendations are adopted, they will inform the recommendations for future electoral reviews for the District Councils in Oxfordshire and any Community Governance Reviews relating to Parish and Town Council boundaries.

## **Corporate policies and priorities**

14. The electoral review is an essential part of good governance for the Council and will ensure that the electorate is represented fairly across the county.

## **Financial implications**

15. There is no specific budget for undertaking the review so costs are being met from General Balances as a supplementary estimate – it is unplanned expenditure but necessary. The costs will be monitored by the Head of Governance and reported through the Business Management Monitoring report.

Costs incurred for the specialist support are approximately £48,000 split over the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

16. The increase in Council size from 63 to 69 members in May 2025 will result in additional costs relating to members including allowances, travelling and officer support. Based on the 2023-24 Basic Allowance of £13,356, the minimum additional cost will be £80,136 which is equivalent to six extra Basic Allowances. This will be addressed as part of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2025-26.

*Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director for Resources and Section 151 Chief Finance Officer*

## **Legal implications**

17. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is established under Section 55 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Consultation Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) and under Section 56 of the 2009 Act must from time to time conduct a review of the area of each principal council and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements for that area. The Council is requested by LGBCE to respond to the electoral review and in doing so must meet the deadlines set by LGBCE for each phase of the review including this further Consultation.
18. Following the completion of the full consultation process and review LGBCE will under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act publish a report stating its recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements for the county of Oxfordshire. This will in due course be brought into legislation by laying an Order before both the House of Commons and the House of Lords using the Negative Procedure. The Order will automatically become law unless there are objections to it within a specified period (usually 40 days). It is anticipated that the changes will become effective at the County Council elections due in May 2025.

*Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer*

## **Staff implications**

19. Limited staff resources are available in Law and Governance to support the review. Extra capacity has been sourced from the Association of Electoral Administrators to allow a specialist with electoral review knowledge to be engaged on a part-time basis to coordinate activities and ensure that critical deadlines are met.

## **Equality and inclusion implications**

20. The electoral review will help in ensuring that the electorate in Oxfordshire, including minority and protected groups, are fairly represented.

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Background papers:

- a) Electoral Review report to Council on 7 October 2022
- b) Council size report to Council on 13 December 2022
- c) Division patterns report to Council on 28 March 2023
- d) Draft recommendations to Council on 12 December 2023
- d) Local Government Boundary Commission for England website  
– [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

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