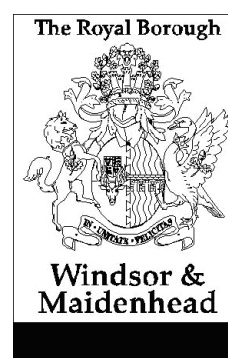


Report for: ACTION



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO - Part I
Title	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Electoral Review
Responsible Officer(s)	Alison Alexander – Managing Director and Strategic Director for Adults, Children and Health Services
Contact officer, job title	David Scott – Head of Governance, Partnership, Performance and Policy and Retuning Officer
Member reporting	Cllr Simon Dudley – Leader of the Council
For Consideration By	Council
Date to be Considered	27 September 2016
Implementation Date if Not Called In	N/A
Affected Wards	All

REPORT SUMMARY

1. This report outlines the rationale to seek an electoral review of the Borough's wards and the overall numbers and distribution of Councillors, by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in the light of recent and future borough population changes.
2. RBWM currently has a relatively low proportion of electors (residents on the RBWM Electoral Register) per ward Member in the majority of wards. Compared to the rest of Berkshire average, and other unitary county and unitary district authorities nationally, the borough is in the lowest quartile. A review would seek to place RBWM on a more comparable basis to our neighbours and reduce the cost to taxpayers of local politicians as part of the drive for efficiencies within RBWM.

If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?

Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit	Dates by which residents can expect to notice a difference
1. Residents would be able to be confident that the numbers of Ward Councillors and the distribution across all the wards had been reviewed and Appropriate consideration have been given to the levels of representation and how it compared to levels in other unitary counties and districts across England.	Likely to be for May 2019 elections

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION: That Full Council endorses a request be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake a review of Member numbers and ward boundaries in RBWM, and delegates authority to the Managing Director and the Returning Officer to prepare the necessary justification to initiate a review request and implement recommendation prior to May 2019.

2. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) last had an electoral review in 2001. This review resulted in a number of changes to ward boundaries and the number of Councillors, effective 2003.
- 2.2 The Borough's population has increased by over 10,000 people since 2003 and is expected to grow further over the next ten years. At present, four (17%) of RBWM's wards are 'imbalanced', ie exceeding the local representation average by 10% or more, 30% is required to trigger an immediate electoral review.
- 2.3 The average number of electors represented by each ward councillor varies across the whole borough, but as a whole RBWM is in the lowest quartile, and a number of options to increase this low average are outlined for further consideration alongside the process to be followed with Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) if a different option to the current position is to be pursued.
- 2.4 Electoral reviews are undertaken to ensure that an area's current electoral arrangements provide the best representation for an area's electors. A review varies in nature and could entail reviewing the:
 - Total number of Members elected to the council.
 - Number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards/divisions) for the purpose of the election of councillors.
 - The number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority.
 - The name of an electoral area.
- 2.5 Periodic electoral reviews (PERs) are carried out by the LGBCE. The LGBCE may make recommendations for changes to a specific area which will be laid before Parliament. If a local authority believes an expedited review is required, it is able to submit a request.
- 2.6 Requests from local authorities can be submitted where there is evidence of significant changes in population, localised increases from major housing developments or movement of people into, or out of, the local authority area.
- 2.7 The LGBCE criteria for a local authority to initiate an electoral review are if:
 - More than 30% of a council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority.
 - One or more wards with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%.

- The imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

2.8 Following a request from a local authority, the LGBCE will meet with the Head of Paid Service and Leader of the Council to ascertain the reasons for their request, assess the likely timescale/scope of a review and secure the commitment of Council officer capacity to meet information requirements in a timely manner.

2.9 As part of the review process, local authorities are asked to present five-year forecasts of their electorate. Guidance on how this is done is available [here](#).

2.10 The Royal Borough last had an electoral review in 2001. This review was part of the PER programme of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Based on demographic changes, the review in 2001 (available [here](#)) recommended that:

- There should be a reduction in Council size from 58 to 57 councillors.
- There should be 23 wards, one more than the time of the review.
- The boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified.

2.11 Since 2001, the Borough's total population has increased by approximately 10,000 and the number of electors has risen by approximately 4,000.

2.12 Table 1 compares the Royal Borough's existing electoral position with that of nearby and similar-sized local authorities.

Table 1: Local authorities compared with RBWM¹

Authority	Approx. population	Wards	Councillors	Average electors/Cllr
RBWM	147,000	23	57	1,897
West Berkshire	165,000	30	52	2,208
Reading	160,000	16	46	2,320
Wokingham	158,000	25	54	2,219
Slough	143,000	15	42	2,347
Bracknell Forest	117,000	18	42	2,014
Average across Berkshire authorities (excluding RBWM)				2,222
Poole	148,000	16	42	2,722
Isle of Wight	140,000	39	40	2,718
Torbay	132,000	15	36	2,911

2.13 The average number of electors per Councillor in the Royal Borough is 1,897. See Table 2 for the Royal Borough's electorate breakdown by ward, based upon the electorate in August 2016.

Table 2: RBWM by ward analysis

Ward	Cllrs	Electors	Per Cllr	Variance from Avg in RBWM	Variance from Avg in Berkshire - excluding RBWM - 2,222

¹ Source: LGBCE

Ward	Cllrs	Electors	Per Cllr	Variance from Avg in RBWM	Variance from Avg in Berkshire - excluding RBWM - 2,222
Ascot & Cheapside	2	4,021	2,011	+6.0%	-9.5%
Belmont	3	6,006	2,002	+5.5%	-9.9%
Bisham & Cookham	3	5,372	1,791	-5.6%	-19.4%
Boyn Hill	3	5,668	1,889	-0.4%	-15.0%
Bray	3	5,723	1,908	+0.6%	-14.1%
Castle Without	3	5,250	1,750	-7.7%	-21.2%
Clewer East	2	3,881	1,941	+2.3%	-12.7%
Clewer North	3	5,883	1,961	+3.4%	-11.7%
Clewer South	2	3,803	1,902	+0.2%	-14.4%
Cox Green	3	5,677	1,892	-0.2%	-14.8%
Datchet	2	3,738	1,869	-1.5%	-15.9%
Eton & Castle	1	1,436	1,436	-24.3%	-35.4%
Eton Wick	1	1,831	1,831	-3.5%	-17.6%
Furze Platt	3	5,690	1,897	0.0%	-14.6%
Horton & Wraysbury	2	4,058	2,029	+7.0%	-8.7%
Hurley & the Walthams	3	4,750	1,583	-16.5%	-28.7%
Maidenhead Riverside	3	6,127	2,042	+7.7%	-8.1%
Oldfield	3	6,835	2,278	+20.1%	+2.5%
Old Windsor	2	3,901	1,951	+2.8%	-12.2%
Park	2	3,979	1,990	+4.9%	-10.5%
Pinkneys Green	3	5,551	1,850	-2.5%	-16.7%
Sunningdale	2	3,942	1,971	+3.9%	-11.3%
Sunninghill & South Ascot	3	5,007	1,669	-12.0%	-24.9%
Total	57	108,129	1,897	-	-14.6%

2.14 Table 2 indicates that four wards (Eton & Castle, Hurley & Walthams, Oldfield and South Ascot & Sunninghill) exceed the 10% variance. This represents 17% of the total 23 wards in the local authority, beneath the 30% threshold to trigger an immediate review. Seven 'imbalanced' wards are required to reach the 30% threshold and trigger a review.

2.15 The variance shows that, at present, the Eton & Castle, Hurley & the Walthams and Sunninghill & South Ascot wards have lower than the average councillors for the ward, and Oldfield has significantly above the Borough average.

2.16 Three wards are getting close to the 10% threshold (Castle Without, Horton & Wraysbury and Maidenhead Riverside). The variance of Maidenhead Riverside ward has risen from 4.5% to 7.7% in the space of 18 months and Park ward has similarly increased by 4% over the same time period, but has not yet reached 5% variance.

- 2.17 Considering an additional 1,500 new homes are due to be built on the Maidenhead Golf Club site (in Oldfield ward) within the next 5-8 years; it is likely that the Oldfield ward will eventually trigger the 30% 'imbalance' threshold by itself. There are also other opportunity areas identified for development also in the Oldfield ward eg St Cloud Way, West Street and York Road), a request for an expedited review could therefore be submitted.

Case Studies

- 2.18 Elmbridge Borough Council made a [formal application](#) for an electoral review in 2014 in order to consider a reduction of members of the Council from the existing 60. Factors that influenced the application included a decrease in the Council's direct responsibilities, population benchmarking with other Surrey Districts and a streamlining of the Council's overall style of governance. The review proceeded despite only 3 (14%) of Elmbridge's 22 wards exceeding the 10% variance threshold based on February 2014 electorate data. In January 2016, the LGBCE published their final recommendations. They recommended that 48 councillors, 20% less, should represent 16 three-member wards across the Borough. The average electorate is due to rise from 1,634 per member to 2,043.
- 2.19 Knowsley Borough Council requested an [electoral review](#) in 2014. Prior to the review, 29% of Knowsley's wards had a variance exceeding the 10% threshold and one ward had an individual variance of 23%. The LGBCE concluded that the number of elected members to Knowsley Council reduce from 63 to 45, representing 15 three-member wards instead of 21.
- 2.20 Looking at the four quartiles of Electors per Councillor, Unitary County and Unitary District Authorities, the spread shows a range from 1,129 in Rutland, to 4,557 in Bristol, see Appendix A. RBWM is in the fourth quartile (lowest) and is the sixth lowest of the 52 councils included. Three other Berkshire unitary authorities are also in the lowest quartile (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham), and the other two (Slough and Reading) are at the lower end of the third Quartile. West Berkshire is currently undertaking a Boundary Review.
- 2.21 The LGBCE are likely to consider a range of options as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Example of options

No	Option	Outcome	Net reduction in Councillors	% Reduction
1	No change. Remain at current average of 1,897 electors per Councillor.	The number of councillors would remain the same at 57.	0	0
2	Move to the fourth national quartile average 2,000 electors per Councillor.	The number of councillors would decrease from 57 to 54	3	5

No	Option	Outcome	Net reduction in Councillors	% Reduction
3	Move to the current Berkshire average 2,222 (excluding RBWM) for electors per Councillor.	The number of councillors would decrease from 57 to 48	9	15
4	Move to the third national quartile average 2,500 electors per councillor.	The number of councillors would decrease from 57 to 43.	14	25
5	Move to the average of the second and third national quartiles 2,850 for electors per Councillor.	The number of councillors would decrease from 57 to 38.	19	33

Next Steps

- 2.22 While the criteria for an immediate electoral review is not currently being met (only 17% of wards are ‘imbalanced’) there will certainly be a need for a review in coming years. The forthcoming Borough Local Plan anticipates an additional 712 homes to be built every year until 2032 and Oldfield Ward is already exceeding the local average by 20%.
- 2.23 The case studies referred to in 2.18 and 2.19 indicate that not all criteria have to be met for the LGBCE to commence a review; each request is assessed on its individual merit. Elmbridge for example only had 14% of wards ‘imbalanced’ prior to its electoral review. With this in mind, the Royal Borough is opting to contact the LGBCE with existing and forecasted population data (including that of the forthcoming Borough Local Plan) to discuss the conducting of an electoral review.
- 2.24 The process involves detailed consultation which is undertaken in a series of stages, over up to a two year period, see table 4:

Table 4: Electoral review stages

Stage	Action	Duration
Preliminary period	Informal dialogue with local authority. Focus 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 also held with officers, group leaders, full council and, where applicable, parish and town councils. At the end of this process, the council under review and its political groups should submit their council size proposals for the Commission to consider.	Up to 6 months in advance of formal start of review.
Council size decision	Commission analyses submissions from local authority and/or political groups on council size and takes a ‘minded to’ decision on council size.	5 weeks

Stage	Action	Duration
Formal start of review		
Consultation on future warding arrangements	The Commission publishes its initial conclusions on council size. General invitation to submit warding proposals based on Commission's conclusions on council size.	12 weeks
Development of draft recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations.	12 weeks
Consultation on draft recommendations	Publication of draft recommendations and public consultation on them.	8 weeks
Further consultation if required	Further consultation only takes place where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations and where it lacks sufficient evidence of local views in relation to those changes.	Up to 5 weeks
Development of final recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its final recommendations.	12 weeks
Post review		
Submission to Parliament	A draft legal order is laid before both Houses of Parliament. The order is confirmed once it has been before each house for 40 sitting days. If passed, all orders come into force at the next whole-council election.	At least 8 weeks

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1

Defined Outcomes	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date they should be delivered by
An electoral review of RBWM is undertaken and the outcomes finalised before the next Borough wide elections in May 2019.	Review not completed	Review completed and outcomes confirmed by 1 December 2018	Review completed and outcomes confirmed by 1 November 2018	Review completed and outcomes confirmed by 1 October 2018	Changes to the Ward boundaries and Ward Member numbers changed with effect at May 2019 Borough wide elections.
The Electoral	Electoral register is	Electoral Register	Electoral Register is	N/A	Revised Electoral

Defined Outcome s	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date they should be delivered by
Register is published to reflect the outcomes of a completed review	not revised	published in December 2018 reflects outcome of the Review	revised in advance of the publication in December 2018		Register is published with effect from December 2018

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS

Financial impact on the budget

- 4.1 An additional Officer will be required to work within the Electoral Services team to undertake the preparatory analysis and review request justification, and to support the detailed area by area analysis work, required to form the basis of the review and revised ward and Member arrangements.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Revenue £'000	Revenue £'000	Revenue £'000
Addition	£25	£50	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Capital £'000	Capital £'000	Capital £'000
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0

The additional officer time will support detailed analysis to inform revised ward boundary options and number of Members for each ward.

- 4.2 Any savings generated from revised ward and Member arrangements would come into effect from after the May 2019 borough-wide elections.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A review can only be undertaken with the consent and support of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. RBWM will need to prepare a justification case for the review and submit this for consideration, to trigger a visit and an initial discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Paid Service.

6. VALUE FOR MONEY

- 6.1 A review of the Borough ward numbers and councillor numbers will help secure value for money from the democratic representation perspective.

7. SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT APPRAISAL

- 7.1 No Sustainability Impact Appraisal has been completed at this stage in the process.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
A review is not supported by the LGBCE due to a lack of capacity within the LGBCE to deliver all agreed reviews	High	A strong justification case is prepared and submitted for RBWM review to be completed	Medium
The review is not completed in time for implementation for the Borough wide elections in May 2019.	High	A timetable is agreed with LGBCE and adhered to throughout the review period.	Medium

9. LINKS TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 9.1 The options outlined in this report will help RBWM ensure it is a more effective and efficient Council.

10. EQUALITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY COHESION

- 10.1 A review undertaken by the LGBCE will take into account equality in terms of electoral ratio and will be reflected in any final report.

11. STAFFING/WORKFORCE AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Additional Officer resource will be required to enable any review to be undertaken in the timescales outlined, should the LGBCE agree to a review. This will necessitate some additional resource to undertake the detailed analysis and mapping to be completed on alternative ward boundary options.

12. PROPERTY AND ASSETS

- 12.1 None directly from this report.

13. ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Although the boundary review would be focused on Borough wards and related councillor numbers, it will need to take into consideration the implications for parish boundaries to ensure natural parish communities are not adversely impacted by changes in borough ward boundaries.

14. CONSULTATION

- 14.1 The boundary review requires significant consultation including local political parties, parish and town councils, and residents. See Table 4 in section 2 of the report.

15. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 15.1 The timetable will be subject to review and agreement with the LGBCE, but it would be intended to complete a review with the intention of enabling any confirmed changes to be implemented with effect for the publication of the new Electoral Register at the beginning of December 2018, which would then inform the next Borough Elections due to be held in May 2019.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Electors per Councillor Unitary County and Unitary District Authorities.

17. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 17.1 RBWM last underwent a Ward level review in 2001 which was implemented with effect from May 2003 elections.

18. CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
Cllr Dudley	Leader of the Council	27 Sept 16	27 Sept 16	
Russell O'Keefe	Strategic Director Corporate and Community Services	27 Sept 16		
Alison Alexander	Managing Director/ Strategic Director Adults, Children and Health	27 Sept 16	27 Sept 16	Comments made throughout the report
Simon Fletcher	Strategic Director Operations and Customer Services	27 Sept 16		
Rob Stubbs	Head of	27 Sept		

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
	Finance and Dep. Director of Corporate and Community Services	16		

REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?
N/A	Yes – to enable Full Council consideration now rather than wait until the December 2016 Full Council meeting.

Full name of report author	Job title	Full contact no:
David Scott	Returning Officer and Head of Governance, Partnerships, Performance and Policy.	01628 79 6748

Electors per Councillor (Unitary County and Unitary District Authorities)

Data source: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

