

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....23rd June 2022

1. Title of Item/Report

Stockton on Tees - Electoral Review - Final Outcome and Next Steps

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that sets out the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and next steps for implementing the changes.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) identified Stockton-on-Tees as requiring an electoral review given the length of time since the last review was carried out.

The review was carried out in stages, initially looking at council size, asking for suggestions on the potential distribution of wards and redrafting of ward boundaries, including consideration of ward name changes. The Council actively participated in the review and encouraged public participation.

In September 2020, the Council submitted a proposal on the future size of the council, as did political groups and members of the public. The LGBCE considered all the submissions and was minded to retain a council size of 56 Members.

The LGBCE produced their own recommendations on ward boundaries and also asked for views on the change of name for wards in the Borough. The initial consultation period closed on 19 July 2021 and this was followed by a further limited consultation from 23 November 2021 to 10 January 2022. After considering all submissions, the LGBCE published their final recommendations on 29 March 2022.

The final recommendations confirmed a Council size of 56 Councillors (the same number as there are now), 27 wards (one more than there are now) and changes to the boundaries of 23 wards with four remaining the same. In addition, as a result of the proposed new ward boundaries, revised parish electoral arrangements had been agreed for Billingham Town Council, Egglecliffe, Grindon and Thorpe Thewles, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Castlelevington and Thornaby. Full details of

the changes can be found at the LGBCE website.

An Order would be laid in Parliament and, subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in May 2023.

With regard to the next steps as a result of changes to wards and boundaries, it would be necessary to conduct an interim polling district review.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a requirement to conduct reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every five years. Although not a compulsory review, the same processes should be undertaken for the areas affected by the interim review. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

A Council's area was divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

Polling districts would need to be revised to ensure that they were co-terminus with the new ward boundaries. In addition, the review would need to consider:

- Polling Districts - Are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
- Polling Places – The location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
- Polling Stations – The suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the Local Authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election

The Electoral Commission Guidance stated:

'Where the polling district/place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are fully in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries but should also take any new boundaries that are not yet in force into account. To avoid having to review the polling districts and polling places again once the new boundaries are fully in force, any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect could be made into separate polling districts as part of the review.'

Also, until the new boundaries were fully in force, the register would need to be constructed in a way that was capable of reflecting the current and the new boundaries. Again, this could be achieved by making any parts of existing electoral areas that would be split when the new boundaries come into effect into separate polling districts.

For the same reasons where, as a result of a review of one set of electoral boundaries, the boundaries for different elections were no longer co-terminous, those areas that were no longer co-terminous could be also be made into separate polling districts.

In short, polling districts would need to be drawn to reflect the needs of both existing and future ward boundaries. This would be achieved by establishing temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 which would then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023. The interim polling district review would therefore consult on temporary and longer-term changes.

The timescales for the review would be as follows:

May 2022 – September 2022 – Preparation and Scoping

- Shape files of the new boundaries are imported into bespoke mapping software along with existing parish boundaries, polling districts, electorate data, and polling stations
- Initial work to be carried out to identify which current polling districts fall wholly within the new ward boundary areas and where current polling districts require splitting to fall within ward boundaries
- Manual creation within the bespoke mapping software to create the temporary polling districts
- Analysis of the temporary polling districts for electorate numbers in preparation for merging into the longer-term solution
- Identifying where the merges of temporary and existing polling districts may occur, ensuring that Parish Boundaries are adhered to
- Renaming polling districts with unique identifiers, to allow for the Electoral Register to reflect the old and new arrangements
- Identifying any gaps in polling stations once the ward / polling district boundaries are reconfigured. i.e. where previously there has been the use of combined stations for two polling districts that are no longer in the same ward
- Identifying potential new stations and assessing suitability
- Preparation of proposal documentation including but not limited to maps of revised polling district areas, both temporary and long-term solutions, as well as suitability and accessibility statements for any

proposed new polling places / stations

Stage 1 - Notification of the Review - 19 September 2022 – 14 October 2022

Statutory Notice/ information to be displayed/ sent to:

- Municipal buildings
- Libraries
- Website
- Stockton News
- All Members
- Parish Clerks
- MPs
- Disability Groups
- BME Groups
- Press Release

Stage 2 – Consultation – 14 October 2022 – 11 November 2022

Publish Acting Returning Officer submission and consult widely with

- Electors
- Political Parties
- MPs
- All Councillors
- Parish Councils
- Council departments
- Presiding Officers/ PSIs
- Disability Groups
- Other interested persons/ bodies

Stage 3 – Concluding the review

Consider representations and make final proposals:

- 17 November 2022 – Cabinet
- 23 November 2022 – Council

Publish Revised Register – 1 December 2022

Publication of notice stating alterations

Stage 4 – Publishing the conclusions of the review

Make available for public inspection the conclusions of the review and all correspondence and minutes.

## Publication and Access to the Register

Following publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2022, elected representatives would still have access to those parts of the Register they were entitled to receive. This entitlement would continue until they cease to be in office. They would not have access to other parts of the Electoral Register under new ward boundaries.

## Use of the Register for the 2023 Elections

From the last date for the publication of the Notice of Election (27 March 2023), candidates and agents would be entitled to receive copies of the Register under the new ward boundaries.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The LGBCE have published their final recommendations.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight Friday 1 July 2022

Proper Officer  
27 June 2022