



Review Officer (Herefordshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for
England
Layden House
76 – 86 Turnmill Street
LONDON
EC1 5LG

Your Ref:

Our Ref: JJ/JL

Please ask for:

Direct Line / Extension:

Fax:

E-mail:

7 January 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to advise you that Herefordshire Council has given detailed consideration to the Commission's Draft Recommendations for the future electoral arrangements for the County, as published with Mr. Gall's letter of 13 November 2012. At an extraordinary meeting held on 4 January 2013, the full Council resolved as follows:

That the Council having considered the draft recommendations of the Boundary Commission -

- (a) accepts the proposal for a Council size of 53 members;**
- (b) supports the submission of Richards Castle parish council, that the parish should be included in the proposed Kingsland ward rather than Mortimer ward;**
- (c) accepts the recommended warding arrangements for the County; and**
- (c) approves the list of proposed ward names as set out in Appendix A for recommendation to the Commission.**

I attach a copy of the Report which was considered by the Council for your attention.

With regard to Richards Castle, Members of the Electoral Review Working Group had seen the detailed case which the parish council has presented for the parish to be included in your proposed Kingsland ward (which, incidentally, this Council considers would better be named "Bircher"). The Council is supporting the parish council's submission, based in summary on the demonstrably strong local links with the neighbouring village of Orleton in the proposed Kingsland Ward, and the separation of Richards Castle by 7 miles of open country and poor road links from the rest of the

2.

proposed Mortimer ward. The impact of this change on electoral equality would be neutral in Mortimer (at 4% either way), but lead to a 13% departure from the average in Kingsland by 2018. The parish council's argument that the community identity and convenient and effective local government criteria should override the electoral equality factor in this case is fully supported by this Council. Although this would lead to a second variance of greater than 10% from the electoral equality average in the County, the Council agrees that this would be justified by the other considerations in this case.

Appendix A to the Report sets out the Council's response to the ward names proposed in your Draft Recommendations. Whilst you will see that a considerable number of these names are accepted, there are other instances where either the retention of the current ward name or an alternative to your proposal is put forward. Due to some late changes at its meeting on 4 January 2013 the Council has not been able to provide a rationale in all cases for the suggested changes. A number of the Commission's proposed ward names seem to be based somewhat arbitrarily on the name of one parish in the area. It is the Council's view that wards should not be named after one constituent parish, since it is confusing to have identical names for different geographical areas and it may also be interpreted as that parish being 'more important' than others. There does also appear to be scope to retain current ward names where there is little change to the boundaries of the wards concerned, which is preferable in terms of continuity and local identities.

Lastly, may I draw your attention to the fact that there are a few descriptive errors in the Commission's report, specifically at paragraph 79 where the heading should be "West" Rural Herefordshire, and at paragraph 85 which should be "East" Rural Herefordshire. Similarly, paragraph 93 should refer to "west" of Sutton Walls, and paragraph 94 to the "east" of Hereford.

As you will see, in overall terms the Council broadly accepts the Draft Recommendations, but I trust that the Commission will be able to take into account this response concerning some detailed aspects when finalising the Electoral arrangements for the County in due course.

With best wishes.

Yours faithfully



DEAN TAYLOR
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Enc

MEETING:	EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
DATE:	4th JANUARY 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HEREFORDSHIRE
REPORT BY:	HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

1. Classification

1.1 Open.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is not a key decision.

3. Wards Affected

3.1 County-wide

4. Purpose

4.1 To consider and approve a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in respect of its proposals for Council size and warding arrangements in Herefordshire, as per the recommendations in Paragraph 5.

5. Recommendation

THAT: the Council considers the draft recommendations of the Boundary Commission, and

- (a) accepts the proposal for a Council size of 53 members;
- (b) supports the submission of Richards Castle parish council, that the parish should be included in the proposed Kingsland ward rather than Mortimer ward;
- (c) subject to any further views or comments, accepts the recommended warding arrangements for the County; and
- (d) approves the list of proposed ward names as set out in Appendix A for recommendation to the Commission. .

6. Key Points Summary

- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBC) began a formal electoral review of Herefordshire in March 2012. The review is necessary because 30% of wards in the county currently have an electoral variance in excess of 10% from the average figure of electors per councillor in the Authority. Particularly, Hollington ward has a variance of 34%.
- The purpose of the LGBC review is to ensure electoral equality as far as possible. Achieving electoral equality means that there are an equal number of electorate per local ward councillor for every Council ward in Herefordshire.
- Council declined to make representations to the Local Government Boundary Commission on a pattern of warding, but it did request that the Commission consider single member ward representation as part of the review.
- The Commission's proposals were considered by the Electoral Review Working Group on 11 December 2012

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 Council can approve an alternative option to that proposed by the LGBC if it wishes, but in doing so, must satisfy the requirement that any alternative proposals should be supported by demonstrable evidence.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 The LGBC will take account of the Council's views in order to inform its final recommendation to Parliament in Spring 2013.

9. Introduction and Background

- 9.1 Having considered the representations received during the previous stages of the review, on 13 November 2012 the LGBC published its draft recommendations for the future electoral arrangements for Herefordshire Council. The Commission has entered into a further period of public consultations, which will last until 7 January 2013.
- 9.2 All comments and further evidence received during this period will be taken into account before the Commission publishes its final recommendations in the Spring, 2013. Submissions may concern the proposed ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements; and may include agreement with particular draft proposals.
- 9.3 A hard copy of the LGBC report, and a large scale map, have been sent to all Members of the Council, and can also be accessed at:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/herefordshire/herefordshire-fer>

together with interactive mapping to show the proposals in detail. The details have also been considered by the Electoral Review Working Group on 11 December, and this report reflects their general conclusions.

10. Key Considerations

- 10.1 In accordance with the resolution of the Council on 20 July 2012, the Commission's proposals are based on a pattern of single member wards across the whole County. However, the Commission is now of the view that the number of councillors should be 53, rather than 54 as previously identified, on the basis that 15 is the right number for Hereford City and therefore 38 should be allocated to the remainder of the Authority to provide for good levels of electoral equality overall (see paragraphs 29 – 31 of the report). As a result, the average number of electors per councillor under the draft recommendations would now be 2681 currently, and 2793 by 2018.
- 10.2 The Commission states in the report that: "only one of our proposed 53 wards will have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the authority by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Herefordshire." The ward concerned is Golden Valley North with a variance of 11%, although it may be noted that three other wards have a variation of exactly 10% from the average in 2018.
- 10.3 The Commission has based its proposals on the principle of not dividing parishes with joint working arrangements. The warding recommendations in the report indicate that no Grouped Parishes (Parish Councils) have been split under the proposals, which has been an important consideration for the Council throughout the review. However, there is an impact on Parish warding arrangements in the urban areas, which is explained in detail in paragraphs 97 – 105 of the report. Although the Commission does not have the power to alter parish boundaries, it must introduce or alter parish warding arrangements where necessary to ensure that parish ward boundaries coincide fully with County ward boundary lines.
- 10.4 Officers of the Electoral Review Project Team and the Members Working Group have reviewed the Commission's analysis and recommendations for electoral arrangements for each area of Herefordshire (as described in paragraphs 42 – 95 of the report), and the Group Leaders have also been briefed on the details. Particular attention has been given to proposals which differ from the scheme developed for consideration by Council last July. In general terms the draft recommendations follow that scheme in Hereford and Bromyard, and in many parts of rural Herefordshire and the Hereford Hinterland.
- 10.5 However, the Commission has adopted a different approach to warding arrangements from the scheme considered by Council in Ledbury, Leominster and Ross, and this also impacts on some of the arrangements adjoining these towns and in the more rural areas. Taken with the change to 53 councillors, and the need to ensure that the rural area has the correct allocation of councillors, it is clear that there would now be significant constraints on developing alternative options, not only for the Market Towns, but also in the neighbouring wards. The Working Group has accepted that, on the basis of single member wards, alternative arrangements could not be achieved without a wholesale redesign of much of the scheme for the County.
- 10.6 As part of the Working Group's discussion it was noted that there might be a little more scope to put forward alternative arrangements in specific areas if the occasional multi member ward was included in the scheme. It was also recognised that in some urban areas there could be a clear response from the community in support of a multi member ward option, based on strong community identity considerations. It was

anticipated that the Commission would take any such representations into account before arriving at its final recommendations.

- 10.7 The Commission's draft recommendations provide that Richards Castle parish council should be included in the proposed Mortimer ward. Representations had been received from the parish council, that the area should be part of the proposed Kingsland ward, based on strong local links with the neighbouring village of Orleton (proposed Kingsland Ward), and the separation by 7 miles of open country and poor road links with the rest of the proposed Mortimer ward. The impact of this change on electoral equality would be neutral in Mortimer, but lead to a 13% departure from the average in Kingsland by 2018. The parish council argues that the community identity and convenient and effective local government criteria should override the electoral equality factor in this case. The Working Group was supportive of this submission.
- 10.8 It should be noted that there are some descriptive errors in the Commission's report, where at paragraph 79 the heading should be "West" Rural Herefordshire, and at paragraph 85 "East" Rural Herefordshire. Similarly, paragraph 93 should refer to "west" of Sutton Walls, and paragraph 94 to the "east" of Hereford.
- 10.9 Members reviewed the list of the proposed names for the 53 wards of the County, as set out on pages 25 – 28 of the LGBC report, and considered whether any more suitable alternatives should be put forward to the Commission. In the more rural areas, many of the proposed ward names seem to be based rather arbitrarily on the name of one Parish in the area. There would also appear to be some scope to retain current ward names where there is little or no change to the wards concerned, if that would be preferred. The Working Group recommends to the Council the list of ward names as set out in Appendix A attached.
- 10.10 Council is requested to consider and, as appropriate, approve the recommendation on Paragraph 5 of this report, so that a response can be made to the Commission's consultation, before the deadline of 7 January 2013.

11. Community Impact

- 11.1 It should be noted that any new warding arrangements could have implications on the Council's current localities.

12. Equality and Human Rights

- 12.1 The proposal of the LGBC will create more electoral parity throughout the County which should make it easier for residents to know who their elected representatives are.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 Costs have been incurred in the preparation of the Council's submission, which can be met from current budgetary provision, and there will be additional costs involved in carrying out any re-warding exercise that will follow the Commission's decision. This will also be met from existing budget provision as no additional support is being made available.

14. Legal Implications

- 14.1 The review is being carried out in accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and the Secretary of State's statutory guidance. The Council has a duty to comply with the review.

15. Risk Management

- 15.1 The major risk associated with this review relates to the implementation of the proposed warding pattern, which will need to be done within existing resources and by experienced staff who already have a full work load. Staff may not be able to cope with the additional workload and there are risks that important tasks/projects fall behind. Careful project management will need to be introduced to deliver everything in the teams' work plans.

16. Consultees

- 16.1 A detailed county-wide communication exercise is being carried out as part of the review.

17. Appendices

- 17.1 Appendix A - Alternative proposals for LGBC ward names.

18. Background Papers

- 18.1 The LGBC's report and mapping, available at:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/herefordshire/herefordshire-fer>

APPENDIX

Ward Boundary Review – alternative proposals for LGBC ward names

- The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) is consulting on the names it has suggested for its proposed new warding arrangements in Herefordshire.
- The Electoral Review Working Group has considered the alternatives, and sets out its preferred ward names below, together with a brief rationale where appropriate.
- The Working Group's proposals are based on the following general principles:
 - Where proposed wards are broadly similar to existing ones (i.e. only changed by one or two parishes), it is recommended that the current name is retained for community identity purposes;
 - Wards should not be named after one constituent parish, since it is confusing to have identical names for different geographical areas and may also be interpreted as that parish being 'more important' than others.

LGBC Name	Herefordshire recommendation	Notes and rationale
1 Ashperton	Trumpet, Newtown and Burley Gate	This ward contains three major crossroads (roundabout) on arterial roads, which are well known to people across the county: Trumpet, Newtown and Burley Gate.
2 Aylestone Hill	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
3 Belmont Rural	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
4 Birch	Golden Valley East	
5 Bishops Frome	Bishops Frome and Cradley	
6 Bobblestock	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
7 Bodenham	Hampton	Ward is substantially different to current Hampton Court, but contains 3 parishes with 'hampton' in their name (Hatfield & Newhampton, Hampton Charles, Docklow & Hampton Wafre). This would also keep some connection with the existing name in terms of the area of the county in which the ward is located (although Hampton Court itself is in ward 11)
8 Bromyard East		<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
9 Bromyard West	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
10 Broomy Hill	Greyfriars	
11 Burghill	Queenswood	Queenswood is a landmark in north of ward that is not the name of a parish.
12 City	City Walls	Ward doesn't cover the whole of the city.

LGBC Name	Herefordshire recommendation	Notes and rationale
13 Clehonger	Stoney Street	One of the most notable things about this ward is that a Roman road runs through part of it, and this has long been referred to locally as "Stoney Street". It is Members' preferred historical reference, highlighting a unique feature. Also, the proposed ward is similar to the existing ward of this name.
14 College	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
15 Colwall	Hope End	Ward is similar to current ward (lost Cradley & Wellington Heath), and still contains Hope End House.
16 Credenhill	-	Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name
17 Dinedor	Dinedor Hill	To reflect a landmark rather than a parish name.
18 Eardisley	Castle	Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name
19 Eign Hill	Central Tupsley	
20 Fownhope	Backbury	Ward is almost identical to current ward (lost Weston Beggard). Recommend retaining existing name, which refers to Backbury Hill. Backbury Hill is a familiar local landscape feature within the ward, which is easily recognised and already accepted as a name for the area locally.
21 Golden Valley North	-	Similar to current ward: recommend retaining name
22 Golden Valley South	-	Similar to current ward: recommend retaining name
23 Grove Farm	Saxon Gate	Name of new large estate in this ward.
24 Hinton & Hunderton	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
25 Holmer	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
26 Kimbolton	Leominster North & Upton	This wards includes a substantial area of Leominster town, so 'Leominster north' recognises this and is consistent with the LGBC's naming convention for the other Leominster town wards. However, it also includes a large rural area – all of which is in the current 'Upton' ward, so including this as part of the name would help with recognition.
27 Kings Acre	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
28 Kingsland	Bircher	
29 Kingstone	Wormside	
30 Kington	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
31 Ledbury North	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
32 Ledbury South	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
33 Ledbury West	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
34 Leominster East	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
35 Leominster South	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
36 Leominster West	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>

LGBC Name	Herefordshire recommendation	Notes and rationale	LGBC Name
37	Llangarron	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
38	Lugwardine	Hagley	Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name
39	Mortimer	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
40	Much Marcle	Old Gore	Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name
41	Newton Farm	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
42	Pembridge	Pembridge & Lyonshall with Titley	Similar to current ward (only difference is addition of Eardisland): recommend retaining name.
43	Penyard	-	<i>Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name</i>
44	Red Hill	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
45	Ross East	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
46	Ross North	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
47	Ross West	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
48	Sutton Walls	-	<i>Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name</i>
49	Tupsley	East Tupsley	
50	Walford	Kerne Bridge	<i>Identical to current ward: recommend retaining name, which is well-recognised and accepted locally, and refers to a local landmark.</i>
51	Weobley	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
52	Whitecross	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>
53	Widemarsh	-	<i>Recommend accept LGBC name</i>