

Report of	Meeting	Date
Returning Officer	Governance Committee	19 November 2019

ELECTORAL REVIEW UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To provide members of the Governance Committee with a progress report on the electoral review of Chorley Council, following the announcement of new warding arrangements being published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on 26 March 2019.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the report be noted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The LGBCE conducted an electoral review of Chorley Council in its 2018/19 work programme to correct voter equality throughout the borough. The LGBCE's final recommendations were announced on 26 March 2019 and resulted in -
 - The size of the council being reduced to 42 (from 47)
 - 14 new borough wards
 - Elections being held by thirds
 - 3 councillors per ward
- Since the LGBCE's announcement, work has been carried out to create new polling districts, which will be implemented with the new ward boundaries at the local election on 7 May 2020. As this election will be the first on the new warding arrangements, a whole of council election will be held. Chorley Council will revert to electing its membership by thirds from 2022.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	✓

BACKGROUND

6. Chorley Council was first informed that the LGBCE would be undertaking an electoral review of the council in June 2017, as part of its 2018/19 work programme to correct electoral equality across the borough. The review was split into 2 stages –
 - Stage 1 – Council Size and frequency of elections
 - Stage 2 – Warding arrangements

7. At the council meeting on 23 January 2018 the Electoral Review of Chorley Council Committee (the committee) was formed with a cross party membership to oversee the review process and make recommendations to council, prior to them being submitted to the LGBCE.

Stage 1

8. Stage 1 of the review required the council to suggest its preferred size, and frequency of elections. After due consideration was given to the council's executive arrangements, scrutiny functions, regulatory duties and its commitment to outside bodies a reduction in the council size to 42 councillors was deemed appropriate by the committee.
9. The committee also recommended that the council should continue to elect by thirds. This decision triggered a requirement of the electoral review which stipulated that where an authority elects by thirds each ward should be represented by 3 councillors. As a result, the number of wards would be reduced to 14. Both recommendations were approved at the council meeting on 10 April 2018, prior to them being submitted to the LGBCE.
10. On 26 June 2018 the LGBCE advised that it was minded to approve the council's preferred council size and frequency of elections.

Stage 2

11. The LGBCE also chose the 26 June 2019 to launch a public consultation which invited interested groups and individuals to suggest the geographical makeup of the new borough wards and their names. The council's response, as proposed by the committee, was approved at its meeting on 18 September 2018 prior to submission to the LGBCE.
12. On 6 November 2018, the LBCE published its' draft recommendation and launched a second public consultation, this time based on the draft recommendation.
13. Although the draft recommendations were largely based on the council's submission, there were some significant differences, which included boundary changes to the wards of Croston and Mawdesley which included the parish of Heskin; and Euxton South being placed with the parishes of Eccleston and Charnock Richard.
14. At the council meeting on 22 January 2019, members approved a response (as proposed by the committee) to the LGBCE's draft recommendations. The response included alternative ward names for some of the wards, which the council considered better reflected the areas contained within them.
15. The council also proposed that that the parish of Heskin should be kept with the parishes of Eccleston and Charnock Richard due to historical, and practical links, and that the links between Eccleston, Charnock Richard and Euxton South were less notable. As a result, the council proposed two alternative options which put the three parishes together, and placed Euxton South with Bretherton, Croston, Mawdesley, and Ulnes Walton.
16. On the 26 March 2019, the LGBCE published its final recommendations which confirmed that –

- the council size will be reduced to 42 elected councillors
- elections will be held by thirds;
- the number of wards have reduced to 14;
- each ward being represented by 3 elected councillors.

PROGRESS MADE

17. On 22 May 2019, the draft order (that would give effect to the LGBCE's final recommendations) was laid in parliament for 40 (sitting) days for scrutiny. Since then, the LGBCE confirmed that the draft order had been confirmed and would come into effect at the next scheduled local elections, due to take place on 7 May 2020.
18. The next step of the electoral review coincided with the national polling place review. Authorities across the country are required by law to consider their polling districts, polling places and polling stations every 5 years based on their existing ward boundaries. As part of the polling place review, authorities are required to undertake a public consultation, which in Chorley, took place over six weeks starting from 26 July 2019.
19. Ultimately, the council's final decision for the polling place review, was not to change any polling stations for existing wards due to an anticipated general election being held before the end of the year. However, it provided the opportunity for officers to consider the suitability of current polling station stock and alternative premises for the new warding arrangements.

NEXT STEPS

20. At the council meeting on 21 January 2020, members will have the opportunity to consider a report which will put forward recommendations of the preferred polling station premises for each ward. Although there is an expectation that most of polling stations used at present will remain as part of the polling station stock; due to changes to polling districts, a significant number of voters will have to attend a different polling station which may not necessarily be the closest to them.
21. Once the polling stations for the new ward boundaries have been finalised a publicity campaign would commence to make voters aware of any changes that could affect them.
22. The electoral register will be published for the first time on the new warding arrangements on 1 February 2020. A further update to the register will be published on 1 March 2020 in time for the election.
23. On 7 May, a whole of council election will take place, with candidates vying to be elected to one of the 42 seats available. The local election will also coincide with the election for Police and Crime Commissioner.
24. Following the election on 7 May, the council will return to electing its membership by thirds from 2022 (elections for Lancashire County Council will be held 2021).

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

25. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	✓	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

26. Although due consideration will be given to allocating voters to the most appropriate polling station, further changes may be required for future elections, due to unforeseen issues being highlighted on the 7 May.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

27. The cost of the elections have been accounted for in the budget. The budgetary implications of reducing the number of elected councillors are marginal and are dependent upon any future changes in member's allowances

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

28. No comments.

GARY HALL
RETURNING OFFICER

Report Author	Ext	Date
Cathryn Filbin	5123	06/11/19