CITY COUNCIL - 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE LGBCE CONSULTATION ON
WARDING PATTERNS IN THE CITY OF NOTTINGHAM

1 SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out a proposed Nottingham City Council response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Review of Electoral Equality in Nottingham City.

1.2 Council are asked to consider a proposal for Warding Patterns in the City of Nottingham, for submission to the LGBCE, and provide formal endorsement.

1.3 More details of the proposal are set out below under Section 7

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Council endorse the proposal for submission to the LGBCE.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The pattern of wards proposed is the most appropriate to enable the authority to meet the criteria for the review set out by the LGBCE, whilst also addressing the specific concerns raised by the LGBCE in respect of the level of electoral equality in the Bilborough, Bridge, Dunkirk & Lenton and Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey wards.

3.2 The proposal allows the City Council to continue to provide efficient local government services and effective decision making, whilst allowing Councillors to continue their representational and leadership roles in the city.

3.3 The proposal ensures that existing local communities and ties in the city are maintained and respected as much as possible, whilst still meeting the LGBCE’s criteria and addressing their concerns.

4 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 A number of different options for potential warding patterns for Nottingham City were considered, based on the preferred Council size of 55 Councillors.

4.2 Options were developed with the aim of minimising disruptive change to the existing city ward boundaries, whilst also addressing the criteria set out by the LGBCE for the review.

4.3 The final proposal presented is considered the most appropriate option to achieve the aim stated above.

5 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

5.1 In July 2016, the LGBCE wrote to the Chief Executive to advise that Nottingham would be subject to an electoral review. In November 2016, representatives of the
LGBCE met with the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader of Nottingham City Council to confirm the process and timetable for the review.

5.2 All Councillors were briefed by the LGBCE at a session on 16 January 2017. Following this, and in line with the LGBCE’s timetable for the review, the City Council submitted its view on preferred Council size, recommending the current council size of 55 Councillors is maintained.

5.3 At December 2016, there were 204,355 registered electors in Nottingham City, an average of 3,715 electors for each of the 55 City Councillors. Nottingham is being reviewed on the basis that:
   - 30% of the council’s wards have an electoral imbalance of greater than +/-10% from the average ratio of electors to councillors for the city (Arboretum, Bilborough, Bridge, Clifton North, Dunkirk & Lenton and Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey wards);
   - two wards (Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey and Dunkirk & Lenton) have an electoral imbalance of greater than -30% from the average ratio for the city.

5.4 The existing ward patterns, introduced following the LGBCE Periodic Electoral Review of Nottingham that concluded in May 2000, support effective and efficient delivery of local government services, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities within the city. There is no compelling case or demand for substantial change to the existing wards in Nottingham, except where necessary to address concerns of electoral inequality.

6. Considerations informing the Nottingham City Council response

6.1 In arriving at the pattern of wards, Nottingham City Council has considered the LGBCE’s statutory criteria for the review:
   - delivering electoral equality for local voters;
   - providing for effective and convenient local government for the city;
   - maintaining the interests and identities of local communities in the city.

6.2 We have sought to address the specific concerns raised by the LGBCE with regard to the levels of electoral inequality in Bilborough (13% above the city average), Bridge (27% above the city average), Dunkirk & Lenton (-31% below the city average) and Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey (-36% below the city average) (based on electorate at December 2016).

6.3 To improve the electoral equality in these areas, we are proposing significant changes to the Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey and Dunkirk & Lenton wards, and lesser changes to the boundaries of Arboretum, Aspley, Bilborough, Berridge, Clifton North, Clifton South and Leen Valley wards.

6.4 We are not proposing any changes to the wards of: Basford, Bestwood, Bulwell, Bulwell Forest, Dales, Mapperley, Radford & Park, Sherwood, St Ann’s and Wollaton West.

6.5 Our proposal seeks to maintain and reflect the interests and identities of our many diverse local communities within the city of Nottingham. We ask that any final proposal put forward by the Commission maintain Nottingham’s existing community links as much as possible, whilst addressing concerns over electoral equality.

6.6 Where we have proposed changes, our proposals seek to ensure that the geographic size of any ward is not so large that it would be difficult for councillors to discharge
their duties and represent it effectively. Our proposals allow people to continue to travel between all parts of a particular ward without having to venture outside of that ward, and they respect identifiable barriers such as major roads, rail lines and natural features.

6.7 The City Council sees particular merit in our proposal, as it does not significantly disrupt the current ward boundaries which have a wider significance than simply providing the framework for electing councillors.

6.8 In Nottingham the current ward structure has been used successfully for many years to provide building blocks for effective neighbourhood management at ward level and through Area Committees, each covering several complete wards.

6.9 Much of the City Council’s neighbourhood working is through Area Committee structures, and local initiatives and funding are pursued and delivered through the Area Committees and their officer support structure.

6.10 This concept of area working based on ward-based building blocks has been accepted by the Police, NHS, local employment support, housing organisations and other partners, and works very effectively within the existing ward structure. Our partners support ward based models of working that align with our existing wards and communities. To significantly disrupt the existing structure will risk diluting the effectiveness of this model and could have a negative impact on the city and our citizens.

6.11 Finally, this proposal respects the existing boundaries of the three Parliamentary Constituencies that cover the city (Nottingham North, Nottingham East and Nottingham South), with no ward proposed that would cross constituency boundaries. This principle is vitally important to ensure that democratic accountability and the clear link between residents, ward councillors and the local constituency MP is maintained.

7 NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL PROPOSAL FOR WARDING PATTERNS IN NOTTINGHAM

7.1 The current two member wards of Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey and Dunkirk & Lenton wards, which are both “over-represented” in terms of the current low number of electors per councillor, merge to create a 3 member ward, provisionally titled “Wollaton East, Dunkirk and Lenton” for the purposes of this proposal.

7.2 This creates an additional councillor that is allocated to Bridge ward, thereby addressing the LGBCE’s concerns about under-representation of electors in this ward.

7.3 The boundary of Bilborough ward is realigned to address the LGBCE’s concerns regarding the under-representation of electors. The Bilborough ward boundary changes to reduce the number of electors by moving a small number into the adjacent Aspley Ward.

7.4 The boundary of neighbouring Leen Valley ward also changes with a small area of housing that is bounded by a main road and playing fields moving to the new “Wollaton East, Dunkirk and Lenton” Ward. The railway line then forms a boundary between this area and the revised Leen Valley ward.

7.5 The boundary of Arboretum ward is extended to include a small number of electors from the existing Berridge ward.
7.6 Nottingham City Council asks that the LGBCE recognise that Clifton North and Clifton South wards are distinct communities with a “hard boundary” to the rest of the city provided by the River Trent, and that there are significant practical difficulties and community identity issues facing any proposal involving a ward which would cross the natural boundary formed by the river.

7.7 On that basis, we propose that the boundary of Clifton North extends into the current Clifton South ward to ensure that the households around Wheatacre Road are all contained in the same ward.

7.8 10 wards remain the same as they were following the conclusion of the 1999/2000 Periodic Electoral Review of Nottingham City.

7.9 The overall number of wards in the city is reduced from 20 to 19.

7.10 The use of “Wollaton East, Dunkirk and Lenton” as the name of the newly formed ward is a provisional title put forward by officers, and is subject to further consultation, and is used only for the purposes of this proposal.

7.11 More details of the proposal are set out in the accompanying draft submission to the LGBCE (Please see Appendix 1).

8 FINANCE COLLEAGUE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY)

8.1 None - there is no financial element in the proposal.

9 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COLLEAGUE COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)

9.1 There are no legal issues arising from the contents of this report.

9.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) must abide by certain rules, set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, when drawing up their proposals for new ward boundaries. As identified in the draft Submission appended to this report, the warding proposal has been developed strictly in line with the criteria set out by the LGBCE and addresses the issues raised by the Commission that prompted their review.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

10.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No ×

An EIA is not required because there is no proposed change to Nottingham City Council policies or provision of services as a result of the proposals in this report.

11 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

11.1 None.
12 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

12.1 LGBCE Electoral Reviews: Technical Guidance

12.2 Nottingham City Council: Council Size Submission to the LGBCE.

COUNCILLOR JON COLLINS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL