

## **REPORT TO Executive**

**Date of Meeting: 17 March 2015**

**Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support, Electoral Registration and Returning Officer**

**Title: ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EXETER**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

**Yes**

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

**Council**

### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report details the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), on new ward boundaries for the City.

### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That it be recommended to Council that the proposed ward boundaries, as indicated on the map and narrative attached to this report, form the Council's official submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in response to its current consultation on the electoral review of Exeter.

### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 Following the resolution of Council on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 regarding the number of Councillors required for the City Council (39) and the cycle of elections (by thirds), the Council has been informed that a public consultation exercise was being undertaken by the LGBCE, as to the ward boundaries in the City which would deliver this.

Two meetings of the cross party Electoral Review Working Group were held on 26<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

The Working Group agreed the proposed ward boundaries as the Council's submission to the consultation, and requests Council's approval of this to meet the timetable of all submissions being required by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This report also details the narrative behind the Group's recommendations, which will, together with this report and supporting map, form the submission to the LGBCE.

### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

4.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

4.2 Members are however reminded that additional temporary staffing has been employed within the elections team to primarily support this process. All out elections in 2016 (which are a consequence of the decision to continue the practice of elections by thirds) will incur the Council in additional costs to those previously anticipated and budgeted for. These will be addressed as and when they occur.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 The need for an additional budget to enable the elections to take place in 2016 will be added to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan as an unavoidable spending pressure. The funds will be drawn from the General Fund Working Balance.

**6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the electoral arrangements for every principal authority in England must be reviewed from time to time.

**7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

**8. Report details:**

- 8.1 As part of an overall consultation exercise being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) into future electoral arrangements in Exeter, the Council is asked to consider the submission of its own proposals for future ward boundaries in the City.

- 8.2 In consideration of this, the Council will need to submit a proposal which, in its opinion, best meets the LGBCE's three criteria, namely:-

- To deliver electoral equality where each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the city;
- That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities; and
- That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

- 8.3 It should be noted that the consultation is open to any interested person or organisation, and that each response (including the Council's) is given equal weighting by the LGBCE.

- 8.4 In drawing up the attached proposals, the Electoral Review Working Group has taken into account the above criteria, as well as the requirement that as the overall number of councillors will be 39, the presumption is that there should be 13 wards in the City, each being represented by 3 councillors. This also therefore ensures that all parts of the City undertake elections each and every year (3 for the City Council and one for the County Council), thereby ensuring equality in voting across the City.

- 8.5 During its discussions, the Working Group considered the following issues:-

- The importance of local communities across the City and the need to ensure that as far as practicably possible, their identity be retained in any new electoral wards;
- The St James Neighbourhood Forum and its status in the city's electoral map;
- A need to minimise any confusion to electors with unnecessary changes;
- A need to ensure that any proposed ward names best reflect local identities;
- A need to ensure that as far as practicably possible, ward boundaries follow definitive lines (river, roads, railway lines etc.) on the ground so that they can be

- easily identifiable;
- Development proposals up to and including 2020.
- 8.6 Once the Council has submitted its proposals, these will be taken into account alongside all others received, with the LGBCE then publishing its own recommendations as to proposed ward boundaries, in June 2015 for a further round of consultation. It is intended to bring these proposals to the Executive on 14 July.
- 9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**
- 9.1 The suggestion put forward here, will ensure that the Council maintains its ability to deliver its services efficiently and effectively without a detrimental impact on Members' perspective and workloads.
- 10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**
- 10.1 If the Council does not produce a submission on ward boundaries (as proposed), the LGBCE will be unable to take the Council's views into account, when drawing up its own recommendations. The Council may, therefore, end up having to work within something which may not best reflect the way in which the Council wishes to work. It is therefore in the Council's best interests to make a submission which, in its opinion, best reflects its own requirements.
- 11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**
- 11.1 The proposed decision will ensure that the Council maintains its ability to deliver its services effectively and efficiently without a detrimental impact on members' perspective and workloads, ensuring that elected councillors continue to best represent their local area and its interests whilst bearing in mind the community's needs.
- 12. Are there any other options?**
- 12.1 None that are considered appropriate or favourable to the Council and its interests.

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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

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