



## Constitution and General Purposes Committee

16 January 2020

<b>Title</b>	<b>Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Electoral Review of Barnet Council - Final Recommendations</b>
<b>Report of</b>	John Hooton - Chief Executive, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	No
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix A - LGBCE - New Electoral Arrangements for Barnet Council - Final Recommendations January 2020
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### Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have published (on 7 January 2020) their final recommendations for the future electoral arrangements for Barnet Council on the LGBCE website - [www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet)

The LGBCE have proposed that Barnet should have 63 councillors (the same as at present) and that those councillors will represent 15 three-councillor wards and 9 two-councillor wards across the borough.

The changes that LGBCE have proposed will now be laid for approval in Parliament. A draft Order (the legal document which brings into force the recommendations) will be laid before Parliament and subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements for Barnet Council to come into effect at the local elections in May 2022.

## **Officers Recommendations**

- 1. That the Committee note the final published recommendations from LGBCE on the future electoral arrangements for Barnet Council.**
- 2. That the Committee notes that, following Parliamentary approval of the LGBCE recommendations, Electoral Services officers in consultation with Barnet's Returning Officer, will undertake a programme of work to propose a complete new set of polling districts and polling places to facilitate the administration of statutory elections within the new ward boundaries. The new polling district and polling place proposals will then be brought to committee for approval in good time for them to take effect ahead of the Local Elections in May 2022.**

### **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has completed a statutory review of the London Borough of Barnet's electoral arrangements. This was the first review of the ward boundaries in the borough since 1999.
- 1.2 This compulsory review examined and proposed new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority, and decided upon:
  - The total numbers of councillors to be elected to the council (Council Size)
  - The names, boundaries and number of council wards
  - The number of councillors to be elected to represent each ward.
- 1.3 The statutory criteria that the LGBCE must apply when making its proposals and decisions are to promote:
  - Electoral equality (a consistent number of electors per councillor)
  - Community identity (strong ward boundaries that reflect communities) and
  - Effective and convenient local government (coherent wards with good internal transport links).
- 1.4 The outcome of the review will be implemented in time to take effect at the Local Government elections scheduled in May 2022 (i.e. these elections will elect councillors to the new wards for the first time).
- 1.5 The Commission have considered all the submissions it received in the previous stages of the review before drawing up these final recommendations.
- 1.6 The LGBCE's final recommendations propose that:
  - Barnet should have 63 councillors (the same as at present)
  - Those councillors will represent 15 three-councillor wards and 9 two-councillor wards across the borough.
  - The boundaries of all wards will change, none will stay wholly the same.

### **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The size and scope of this statutory Electoral Review is such that it will affect;
  - the number of councillors elected to form the council
  - the boundaries, names and number of all wards, and
  - the electoral representation of all electors and residents by elected members.

- 2.2 Following the implications outlined in 2.1 above and to allow for the conduct of legally compliant elections in future, electors within the new wards will need to be assigned to new polling districts (wholly contained within the new wards). Each of the new polling districts will need to be served by polling places (and polling stations) that meet, so far as is practicable, the requirements for in-person voting, as laid out by the Electoral Commission. This is likely to require a number of completely new venues that can be used as polling places across the borough.
- 2.3 The Constitution and General Purposes Committee terms of reference include: ‘to have responsibility for overseeing the Council’s governance arrangements including Electoral Services including: elections and electoral registration performance; and polling places and polling district boundaries’.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 Following adoption of the LGBCE proposals by Parliament, there is no legislative alternative to implementing the new electoral arrangements in time for the local government elections in May 2022. From this point, it will also be so necessary to compile and maintain the Register of Electors into new polling districts and for new polling places to be designated to facilitate voting. Failure to fully implement appropriate and statutorily compliant arrangements will lead to eligible electors being disadvantaged, or in some cases, disenfranchised altogether when voting at elections.

### **4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The changes that LGBCE have proposed will now be laid for approval in Parliament. A draft Order (the legal document which brings into force the recommendations) will be laid before Parliament and subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements for Barnet Council to come into effect at the local elections in May 2022.
- 4.2 Following Parliamentary approval of the LGBCE recommendations, Electoral Services officers in consultation with Barnet’s Returning Officer, will undertake a programme of work to propose a complete new set of polling districts and polling places to facilitate the administration of statutory elections within the new ward boundaries.
- 4.3 The new polling district and polling place proposals will then be brought to committee for approval in good time for them to take effect, and to be communicated to voters, ahead of the Local Elections in May 2022.

### **5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

#### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 The council’s Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, has three outcomes for the borough, that focus on place, people and communities.
- 5.1.2 This LGBCE review of Barnet’s electoral arrangements (i.e. council size and ward boundaries) is designed to ensure that the London Borough of Barnet continues to have an optimal number of elected Members and that wards offer electoral equality

to the borough's electors.

## **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.2.1 The LGBCE's final proposal that Barnet retains a council size of 63 councillors will have no new cost implications arising with regards Elected Member resources or servicing from the Electoral Review.
- 5.2.2 It will be necessary for Barnet's Electoral Services to review and amend the polling district and polling place arrangements that will be required from May 2022.
- 5.2.3 Should it be assessed that additional polling places are required, there will be additional costs incurred during the conduct of local elections (i.e. additional polling venue hire costs and additional polling station staff costs). The costs for elections other than local elections are recovered from the relevant governing body (e.g. Parliamentary elections are paid for by the Cabinet Office and London Mayoral/GLA elections are paid for by the GLA).

## **5.3 Social Value**

- 5.3.1 Maintaining electoral arrangements that promote electoral equality, strong community identity and effective and convenient local government, ensures that eligible residents can participate in statutory elections and referendums. In turn this ensures that they are properly represented in the democratic processes of the borough and in the decision-making of the Council.

## **5.4 Legal and Constitutional References**

- 5.4.1 Section 56 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) requires that the LGBCE review 'from time to time' every principal local authority in England and make recommendations about electoral arrangements (but not their external boundaries).
- 5.4.2 The Constitution and General Purposes Committee terms of reference includes oversight of "Electoral Services including: elections and electoral registration performance; and polling places and polling district boundaries and to make recommendations thereon to the Council."
- 5.4.3 The ERO has a duty under Section 9(1) of RPA1983 to maintain:
  - a) a register of parliamentary electors for each constituency or part of a constituency in the area for which he acts; and
  - b) a register of local government electors for the local government areas or parts of local government areas included in the area for which he acts
- 5.4.4 The ERO has a duty under Section 9A of RPA1983 (as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA2013)) to take all necessary steps to comply with his duty to maintain the electoral register, and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, persons who are entitled to be registered in the register (and no others) are registered in it.

## **5.5 Risk Management**

- 5.5.1 If ward boundaries are not periodically reviewed to ensure that Barnet has an appropriate number of councillors then there is a risk of there being an inequity in councillors' case work across the borough. Moving ward boundaries and/or creating

or removing wards enables ward to contain a broadly consistent number of electors (and residents) in each ward.

- 5.5.2 Poorly defined ward boundaries or polling district boundaries could result in eligible electors being disadvantaged when voting at elections or in extreme cases, being disenfranchised altogether.

## **5.6 Equalities and Diversity**

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
  - foster good relations between people from different groups.

- 5.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

- 5.6.3 The LGBCE considered the equality implications throughout the boundary review. Officer do not consider that there is any negative impact on equalities.

## **5.7 Corporate Parenting**

- 5.7.1 Not applicable

## **5.8 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.8.1 The LGBCE ran the public consultation on the electoral review of Barnet ([www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet)) which was widely publicised by the Commission and Barnet Council.

## **5.9 Insight**

- 5.9.1 The data included in LGBCE report is publicly available via the LGBCE website ([www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/barnet)).

## **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1 [LGBCE New electoral arrangements for Barnet Council Final Recommendations](#)