

## ASSEMBLY

27 January 2021

<b>Title:</b> Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Ward Boundary Review 2020	
<b>Report of the Leader of the Council</b>	
<b>Open</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Strategic Leadership Director:</b> Fiona Taylor, Director of Law and Governance and Acting Deputy Chief Executive	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>Following the announcement by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a review of Barking and Dagenham's ward boundaries, this report follows the decision taken by the Assembly on 22 July 20 on the Council Size proposal of 51 councillors. This being the total number of councillors who in the Council's opinion, should be elected to the local authority in future local government elections. This recommendation was based on projected electoral numbers, the Council's current governance arrangements, the representational role of councillors and future trends and plans.</p> <p>The LGBCE being 'minded to' support the Council's submission, undertook a public consultation exercise, seeking a wide range of local views with reasons as to the Borough's ward boundary pattern, including the number and names of proposed wards, together with the number of councillors per ward. This consultation exercise ran for seven weeks and concluded on 11 January 2021.</p> <p>The Council as a statutory consultee was invited to make a submission. Consequently, all Members were given the opportunity both collectively and individually to comment on the proposed ward boundary pattern having regard to both the Council size proposal of 51 councillors and the three main principles underpinning the LGBCE criteria for conducting reviews, namely</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Delivering electoral equality for local voters to ensure that, as far as possible, each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.</li><li>2. Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities by establishing electoral arrangements that maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable, and</li><li>3. Promoting effective and convenient local government to ensure that the proposed wards can be represented effectively by their elected representatives.</li></ol> <p>In the light of the above a prospective ward boundary map was drawn up with supporting information, proposing the creation of nineteen wards, made up of a combination of 2 and</p>	

3 Member wards, and which given the 11 January 2021 deadline to respond, was presented to the LGBCE as the Authority's in principle view as to its favoured ward pattern arrangements, subject to approval by the Assembly at this meeting.

### **Recommendation(s)**

That the Assembly:

- (i) Agree the proposed ward pattern for the Borough of nineteen (19) wards made up of a combination of 2 and 3 Member wards based on the configuration detailed in ward boundary map set out in **Appendix 3** with additional information as set out in **Appendix 4** (*location of schools*), **Appendix 5** (*location of places of worship*) and **Appendix 6** (*supporting information for each of the 19 proposed wards*), and which includes reference to the creation of two new wards named Creekmouth and Roding, and
- (ii) That the decision be reaffirmed with the LGBCE.

### **Reason(s)**

LGBCE has a legal duty to undertake an electoral review of each council in England 'from time to time' and has scheduled for a review of Barking and Dagenham's electoral arrangements to begin in 2020 to come into effect from the local elections in May 2022.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) confirmed that a review of Barking & Dagenham's ward boundaries would commence this year, and which was formally launched with a presentation to Members in January 2020. The outcome of the final approved review comes into place from the next local elections in May 2022.
- 1.2 The first phase of the review involved the LGBCE reaching a judgement on the total number of councillors to be elected to the Council at future elections (Council Size) based on an electoral forecast up to 2026. In this respect the Assembly at its meeting on 22 July 2020 agreed to recommend to the LGBCE a Council Size submission remaining at 51 councillors, which it felt was justified to enable each councillor to deliver/fulfil their responsibilities and duties as elected ward representatives.
- 1.3 The Council currently has seventeen wards and fifty-one councillors with each ward represented by three councillors. At the time of the last review in 1999 each councillor represented an average of 2,235 eligible electors. As of January 2020 each councillor represented, on average, 2,782 eligible electors, and in 2026 each councillor is forecast to represent, on average 3,418 eligible electors.
- 1.4 At a meeting on 20 October 2020 the LGBCE were mindful to support the Council Size submission, and thereby recommended for consultation purposes that the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham should in the future continue to be made up of 51 Councillors. At that meeting the LGBCE further decided:

- that the figure of 141,874 (*eligible electorate as of January 2020*) should form the starting figure for the review; and
  - to use 174,322 (*the Council's electoral forecast for 2026*) as the total electorate figure to underpin their public consultation on where ward boundaries should be drawn in Barking and Dagenham.
- 1.5 The LGBCE's 'minded to' decision on Council Size and the agreed electoral forecast set out in **Appendix 1** underpinned an initial public consultation exercise which the Boundary Commission launched on 27 October and which ran until 11 January 2021.
- 1.6 This consultation invited the Council, political groups, community groups, residents and other interested parties to propose:
- new ward boundaries,
  - ward names, and
  - the number of councillors per ward
- 1.7 The criteria for proposing new wards must:
- result in each councillor representing roughly the same number of voters as other councillors,
  - reflect community interests and identities, as far as possible,
  - have boundaries that are identifiable, and
  - promote effective and convenient local government.

## 2. Barking and Dagenham Population today

- 2.1 During this century Barking and Dagenham has become one of the fastest changing communities in Britain:
- Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses the population rose from 164,000 to 186,000 and is projected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to rise to 228,000 by 2043. This does not include the impact from planned housing or economic developments – Barking and Dagenham is planning to build 50,000 new homes over the next 25 years;
  - The most recently available provisional local population estimate from ONS was 212,906 as of 30 June 2019;
  - The age of the community is changing with the highest birth rate in London and a large number of young people, with Barking and Dagenham having the highest proportion of under 16-year olds in the UK;
  - The borough becomes more diverse each year – the proportion of the population identifying as coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds has increased from 19.1% to 50.5% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, whilst those identifying as White British has reduced from 80.9% to 49.5%. Ethnic projections available from the GLA forecast 66% of the borough population identifying as coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in 2020 compared to 34% identifying as White British;
  - People in the borough die earlier, have poorer health and lower levels of education and skills than across London, whilst too many residents are in low paid work and struggle to find suitable homes they can afford; and

- Barking and Dagenham had the highest overall deprivation score in London according to the 2019 indices of deprivation published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

### **3. The Challenge**

- 3.1 The identities of the Borough's current wards are well established. The last Borough electoral review took place in 1999. Prior to that review the Borough was made up of twenty wards (11- 3 member and 9-2 member wards). Although a number of former ward names were dropped, and other ward boundaries modified, fifteen of the current seventeen wards have retained their name and identity and have been familiar to local residents over a number of decades.
- 3.2 The electoral forecast shows is that by 2026 fourteen of the current wards (82.4%) will have an elector per councillor ratio that is (+/-) more than 10% from the average ratio for the borough. This is because significantly more housing development is happening in Abbey, Gascoigne, River and Thames before 2026 than has either happened for a long time within the borough or is planned in the remaining thirteen wards. (See map of proposed housing developments in **Appendix 2**).
- 3.3 The elector per councillor ratio for these four wards and the borough as a whole is significantly driven up in comparison to those wards with fewer or no housing developments. This is mainly due to the Council's growth agenda where regeneration has focused mainly on the land development opportunities in parts of Barking as compared to large parts of Dagenham. The impact of this varied growth means that in the absence of a review a considerable number of ward councillors would represent significantly differing numbers of residents. The challenge therefore has been to propose a pattern of wards that improves equality of representation across the borough whilst seeking to preserve the identities and interests of its well-established local communities.
- 3.4 This review provides the opportunity to propose sensible boundary changes as set out in the proposed ward pattern boundary map, and where the identity/essence of a ward has seen significant changes since the previous review more than 20 years ago. An example of this is the massive development at Barking Riverside within the Thames Ward which has seen large scale development in the recent past, and which justifies the creation of a second ward (Creekmouth).

### **3. Next stage of the Review**

- 4.1 After analysing all submissions from the public consultation including that submitted by the Council, the LGBCE will publish their draft recommendations on the future electoral ward arrangements for Barking and Dagenham on 23 March 2021. They will then open a second public consultation where all interested parties will be invited to comment on/challenge their recommendations and which will run until 31 May 2021. This is normally the final opportunity to influence the review, although the process does allow for the LGBCE to undertake further public consultation should they decide to significantly change their draft recommendations based on the outcomes of the second consultation.

- 4.2 The final part of the review involves LGBCE publishing their recommendations and preparing a draft Order which must be laid before Parliament for a period of 40 sitting days from September 2021.

#### **4. Options Appraisal**

- 5.1 This stage of the review involves the submission by the Authority of its preferred ward pattern proposal based on 51 councillors, including the number (19) and names of wards and the number of councillors representing each ward (combination of 2 and 3 per ward). The main principles applied to the review as set out in paragraph 1.7 above includes specifically a requirement to ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors across each ward. Therefore, in choosing not to recommend any single member wards, it was not possible from an electoral equality standpoint to maintain the current arrangements of 17 wards, each represented by three councillors.

#### **6. Consultations**

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been the subject of detailed discussions at the officer working group and discussed with Members both collectively and individually. Forming part of the review the LGBCE are carrying out a number of public consultation exercises, for which the Council has provided the Boundary Commission with a list of local key stakeholders.

#### **7. Financial Implications**

*Implications completed by Sandra Pillenger, Group Accountant*

- 7.1 This report has no direct financial implications as it does not contain any financial proposals. As the recommendation is to continue with 51 councillors the financial impact can be considered negligible.

#### **8. Legal Implications**

*Implications completed by Dr Paul Feild, Senior Governance Solicitor*

- 8.1 The main piece of legislation is the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). This consolidates and amends provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Section 56 of the 2009 Act requires that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the 'Commission' for short) review 'from time to time' every principal local authority in England and make recommendations about electoral arrangements.
- 8.2 From July 2018, the Commission began a three-year program of electoral reviews of London Boroughs, that it had not reviewed in the last 5 years which includes Barking and Dagenham.
- 8.3 A Commission electoral review works to recommend new ward boundaries that mean each councilor will represent approximately the same number of voters. A

review also aims to ensure that the pattern of wards reflect the interests and identities of local communities as well as promoting effective local government.

- 8.4 The Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Council as well as the number, boundaries, and names of wards.
- 8.5 In undertaking the review the Commission must have had regard to the statutory criteria contained in the 2009 Act and to their own technical guidance in carrying out a review (the most recent being their 2014 edition).

## **9. Other Implications**

- 9.1 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** – The outcome of the Review will determine the number of councillors for the Borough as well as both the number and ward boundaries, allowing for the most effective representation of the Borough's diverse communities. It will accord with the Vision and Priorities for the Borough.

### **Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Technical Guidance 2014  
(<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>)

### **List of appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Forecast electorate for 2026, based on both the existing and proposed ward structure
- Appendix 2 – Map of housing developments expected to happen by 2026
- Appendix 3 – Map of proposed ward boundaries
- Appendix 4 – The location of schools within the proposed wards.
- Appendix 5 – The location of places of worship within the proposed wards.
- Appendix 6 – Supporting information for each of the 19 proposed ward